



**KELLOGG**

RURAL LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAMME



# Thriving Early Career Development

For rural professionals in skilled technical support roles

**Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme**

**Course 48 2022**

**Sarah McKenzie**

I wish to thank the Kellogg Programme Investing Partners for their continued support.



## Disclaimer

In submitting this report, the Kellogg Scholar has agreed to the publication of this material in its submitted form.

This report is a product of the learning journey taken by participants during the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme, with the purpose of incorporating and developing tools and skills around research, critical analysis, network generation, synthesis and applying recommendations to a topic of their choice. The report also provides the background for a presentation made to colleagues and industry on the topic in the final phase of the Programme.

Scholars are encouraged to present their report findings in a style and structure that ensures accessibility and uptake by their target audience. It is not intended as a formal academic report as only some scholars have had the required background and learning to meet this standard.

This publication has been produced by the scholar in good faith on the basis of information available at the date of publication, without any independent verification. On occasions, data, information, and sources may be hidden or protected to ensure confidentiality and that individuals and organisations cannot be identified.

Readers are responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the content of this publication & the Programme or the scholar cannot be liable for any costs incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying solely on the information in this publication.

This report is copyright, but dissemination of this research is encouraged, providing the Programme and author are clearly acknowledged.

Scholar contact details may be obtained through the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust for media, speaking and research purposes.

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	4
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	5
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>2.0 Aims and Objectives</b> .....	6
<b>3.0 Methodology</b> .....	7
<b>3.1 Research, investigation, and limitations</b> .....	7
<b>4.0 Literature Review</b> .....	7
<b>4.1 Early career development of rural professionals</b> .....	7
4.1.1 Sector needs .....	9
4.1.2 Employer needs .....	12
4.1.3 Employee needs.....	14
<b>4.2 Options and designs of early career development support</b> .....	16
4.2.1 Graduate programmes.....	17
4.2.2 Mentoring programmes.....	18
4.2.3 Internships .....	18
4.2.4 Sabbaticals or Secondments .....	19
4.2.5 Connecting to industry groups.....	19
4.2.6 Sector or collaborative graduate programmes.....	20
4.2.7 Utilisation of Micro-credentials or short courses .....	20
<b>4.3 Suitability of a graduate programme</b> .....	21
<b>5.0 Key findings and Discussion</b> .....	21
<b>5.1 Analysis</b> .....	21
<b>5.2 What is important for early career development</b> .....	22
<b>5.3 Graduate programme considerations</b> .....	24
<b>5.4 Section Summary</b> .....	25
<b>6.0 Conclusions</b> .....	26
<b>7.0 Recommendations</b> .....	26
<b>Reference list</b> .....	27
<b>Appendices</b> .....	31

## Executive Summary

There is great potential and high demand for our Food and Fibre sector graduates. Even with a high focus on sector initiatives to attract and retain people, the rural talent shortage continues to challenge the industry at all levels. Businesses are facing the likelihood of more frequent new staff turnover (every 18 months – 3 years) with many direct and indirect costs that have flow-on effects. Integrating new staff into their roles as soon as possible is highly desirable to minimise disruption. This study looked at what is important for thriving early career development for rural professionals in skilled technical support roles in agribusinesses. It aimed to understand the options and designs for early career development and the key features of a successful graduate programme. The methodology included a literature review, followed by semi-structured interviews with 12 early to mid-career employees and eight agribusiness support companies to understand expectations and perspectives from their experiences.

### Key findings:

A career is a process, not a destination, with constant moving parts and balancing priorities. Early career experiences are one factor in retaining new talent or attracting them back later in their career. Support, connections, proactive development conversations and providing graduates ownership of certain tasks are all key factors for a positive experience. Graduate programmes can help provide structure, but it is often the individual experiences with an employer, with considerations of balancing lifestyle, development and career aims. Businesses need to look at their situation and roles to understand the specific turnover challenges, and how to address these. Most students at university do not have clarity of their career path. They have general themes of perceived importance that can change with experience. Companies need to do more to promote options for summer work and internships to assist students with their career direction and provide examples of sample career paths. Graduate programmes can attract new talent, but they must be well considered for talent retention. Graduate roles not part of a structured programme can be just as successful and sought out by students. Awareness of the opportunities can be a limitation, as it is often through personal connections and word of mouth. It is important to take the time to understand what both the business and the employee need to ensure there isn't a difference between expectations and reality. Do not overpromise and under-deliver. Companies are often pleasantly surprised by the value graduates can add to their business, regularly exceeding expectations. It is important to ensure this value is realised and that the "new graduate" title doesn't limit employee's responsibilities or opportunities.

### Recommendations for businesses:

- Have proactive open conversations on career progression.
- Describe example career pathway options, to allow employee visibility and consideration to their career aims and interest. Promote open feedback and reflection from this.
- Invest early in learning and development in communication and soft skills as well as technical skills.
- Undertake a strategic review of graduate roles within companies. Considering the structure, core tasks, and what else can be done for opportunities as a career package.
- Explore options for a collaborative event for Agri-graduates and early career employees within regions to foster and support early networking, promote connections, and build relationships.
- Investigate improved sector options for formal or informal early career employee training and consider supporting networking and providing mentoring support.
- Align more with university courses and have early and mid-career employees participate in networking events to share experiences and potential sample career pathways.

**Recommendations for early career employees:** seek out industry networking groups for stimulation and support, particularly if not receiving development or support within current role or company.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to first acknowledge to work of The New Zealand Rural Leadership trust. The Kellogg Rural Leadership programme is one I aspired to participate in for many years. The whole team involved with the programme, including Chris Parson, Scott Champion, Patrick Aldwell, Lisa Rogers and Annie Chant have ensured my long-awaited experience exceeded expectations.

Thank you to my employer Agricom, for investing in me and supporting my career development. Thank you to all my past and present colleagues in my direct and wider team that I have learnt from in my career to date.

For this project, I would like to thank all the people I interviewed or talked to, who were very open and shared their time, thoughts, and experience to provide me insights and perspectives into my topic.

Thank you to my husband Sam, for being as understanding as you could for the evenings and weekends I spent trying to focus on this project.

Finally, thank you to all the team of Cohort 48. You have all made my experience memorable through your contributions and discussions throughout the course.

## 1.0 Introduction

In a time when finding and retaining skilled talent is increasingly difficult, there is value in being an employer of choice to attract and retain new talent. The rural talent shortage continues to be an issue (Bell, Grimmond, & Yap, 2014; Rowarth, 2013; PWC, 2022). There are increased demands for professional rural services including researchers, rural consultants, veterinarians, agronomists, and irrigation specialists, as well as non-traditional areas in precision agriculture, engineering, IT, and robotics (MPI, 2014). While graduates are in high demand and have good employment and income opportunities, retention in the food and fibre sector is less than the New Zealand average, with only 29% still employed in the sector after three years (Bell, Grimmond, & Yap, 2014; Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019). This statistic is not specific to rural professionals, but there are trends that recent generations in the workforce change roles more regularly (Vaughan, 2010).

---

*Can a tailored graduate programme fast-track and streamline new employees' early career experience to get them thriving in their roles as soon as possible?*

---

When employees leave, there are often large costs to not only employers, but also costs associated with disruptions to their clients, change in consistency of service or others workflow disruptions. The cost re-hiring and re-training also needs to be considered and there can be a lag phase with new employees.

As a sector we need a skilled current and future workforce to deal with increasingly complex farm system and regulation requirements. Tertiary graduates in agriculture, environmental and related studies are important for their specialised skills and farm systems knowledge within a New Zealand context. Our farmers and growers need to be supported as we strive to meet our future technical and environmental challenges in areas such as mitigating greenhouse gasses, improved water quality and animal welfare, while aligned to UN sustainable development goals and continuing to produce high quality, world leading and demanded product.

---

*“People need to work hard and be supported in their 20’s (early career), so that they can thrive in their 30’s” (Green, 2017).*

---

This report investigates what is important for thriving early career development for rural professionals in technical farm support roles. Finding from this report will help agribusinesses consider what is important for the development of early career graduate employees. It will provide some key features if considerations a graduate programme, and some good examples that early career employees can consider when taking control of their career aspirations.

## 2.0 Aims and Objectives

With a focus on rural professional technical farm support roles, the aim of this research project is to:

1. Identify what is important for thriving early career development
2. Understand options and designs of early career development support
3. Investigate to better understand the key features of a successful graduate programme

## 3.0 Methodology

The aims of this report were investigated and reported on by looking into the current literature, and semi-structured interviews. A literature review investigates what is important for early career development of technical roles for rural professionals with perspectives of the sector, employer, and employee needs. It explores options and designs of early career development pathways, including graduate programmes, and other support structures, to better understand the features of a successful graduate programme and its integration.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of companies, organisations, and employees from throughout the sector to understand the types of programmes, key features, perception, success factors and challenges to draw out perspectives to form the basis of key themes and ideas to support the aims. These were to gain recent local New Zealand perspectives and experience to complement the literature review, and to understand if there were different perspectives from employees and employers with career development expectations.

Thematic analysis of the interviews formed key themes and ideas, combined with the literature review, allowing the insights for discussion and SWOT analysis for conclusions and recommendations.

### 3.1 Research, investigation, and limitations

The companies and organisations interviewed were to help understand current early career development and graduate programme opportunities in New Zealand from an employer's perspective. This included eight companies or organisations, all relevant to the food and fibre sector, and were both private and industry organisations. Of those interviewed, six out of eight were from medium to large enterprises (<50 people), so there may be limited insights from smaller company perspectives.

Interviews with 12 employees were completed, including six early career graduates (<five years in career) and six early to mid-career (five to 15 years). Employees were in various rural professional technical support roles, involving those who had and hadn't been through graduate programmes. General conversations were had with a small number of later career employees (>20 years), HR specialists and consultants for insights and framing of the topic.

The project's scope draws on some general sector and employee themes but focuses on technical support roles for rural professionals. The information captured may have some relevance to other parts of the food and fibre sector, although direct comparisons may be limited, and on-farm workers were beyond this project's scope.

Reviewed interview findings were summarised into key themes through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing links back to the literature for discussion. The identified themes were valued based on relevance to the aims, and frequency and then diving down into the drivers and experience of interviewees. While it is limited to general trends and ideas due to the limited size and scale of this project and research, it is relevant local and recent experiences.

## 4.0 Literature Review

### 4.1 Early career development of rural professionals

A career has changed from achieving successful employment and retaining that job to more of a process over time, hence the term career development (Vaughan, 2010). There were many examples of literature about early career development in general (Vaughan, 2010; PWC, 2017) or particular sectors (Bowyer, 2022; Allen & Simpson, 2020; Brent, Sanger, & John, 2017; European Education Area, 2022; Fox, 2010).

---

*Career development: the process that “focuses on managing life, career, work and learning decisions throughout life and at any age” (Vaughan, 2010)*

---

A study by Vaughan (2010) followed the first five years of recent school leavers from New Zealand in their early career paths. Initial themes of **security** and **exploration** were identified by those interviewed. Assumptions were that people would gravitate to one or the other and be mutually exclusive. But the students regularly chose wide and varied study and career paths on purpose to keep their options open. The work identified that most young people thought of their “career” as a process, not a destination. It was common to have a lack of decision in a set path, and there was the potential for a lot of change in the first five years (Vaughan, 2010).

The following sections narrow down the various needs identified by the literature considered for the early career development of rural professionals from the perspective of the sector, employers and employees.

The adapted Kubler Ross (Whatfix, 2022) change curve model in Figure 1 can be used to demonstrate the flow of emotions (or engagement) new employees could feel when starting a new role or learning a new task. The adapted model also considers the impact during this time on productivity. It compares well managed and supported career progression versus a slower path with less support. Without adequate support, there is a lag phase to reach maximum productivity, or it can result in disengagement and departure from the role (Whatfix, 2022).

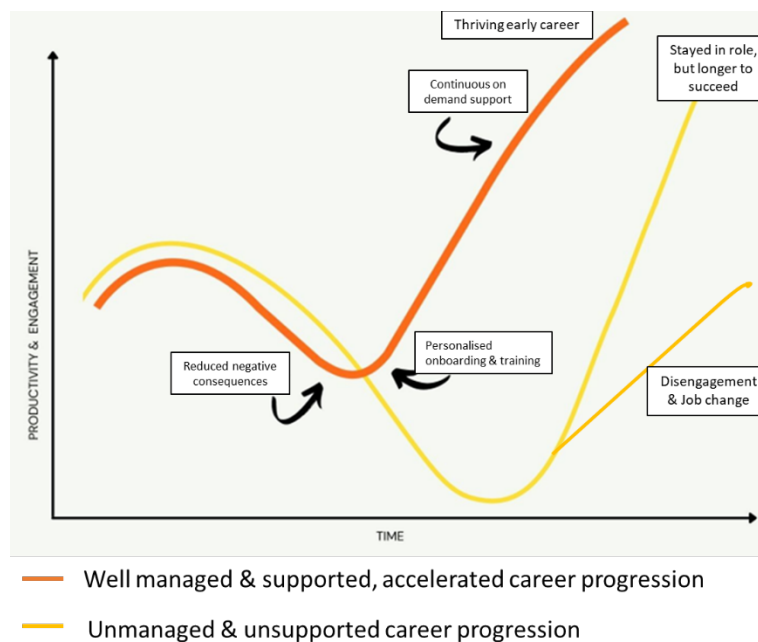


Figure 1: Contextual example of employee training in relation to the Kubler Ross change model. Adapted from Whatfix (2022)

### Terminology:

Duker (2019) described that while the term “rural professional” is a common term it is hard to find a definition. They are generally the service providers, with farmers or other rural professionals being their clients. For this report, the interpretation includes such things, but not limited to, the professional services from researchers, rural consultants, veterinarians, agronomists, and irrigation or fertiliser specialists, and the associated agribusiness that they are part of. The term “early career” is described as



the early years post-university study. For this report, this is generalised as the first five years, with a focus on years transitioning from university to work. Many roles within the rural professional sector do not necessarily require university study (Tertiary Education Commission, 2020), but this report focuses on the pathway that has typically come from university into a first job. A “graduate programme” (also known as a ‘graduate scheme’ or, occasionally, ‘trainee programme’) can be considered a fast-track career path (Scarlati, 2022). For this report it is used from the company perspective, as the first step into a career, and often an entry-level job that provides on the job training. Further specific detail of graduate programmes in section 4.2.1. A graduate programme from a university perspective may involve the consideration of further study options following an undergraduate degree, but this is not the perspective or how the term is used for this report.

#### 4.1.1 Sector needs

There is lots of change coming at the food and fibre sector, and skilled people are needed to achieve both production and environmental and social goals.

---

*“I am a strong advocate of making sure individuals can be trained and mentored in their 20’s, receiving as many experiences as possible, so they can be at the “top of their game” in their 30’s” (Green, 2017)*

---

New Zealand is well regarded in terms of the whole-of-system approach to career support (PWC, 2017), but there is the continued comment from recent New Zealand reports that young people and graduates are not aware of the range of career options (Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019; Brenton-Rule, 2020). The need for rural technical support services has been increasing and is expected to continue. Figure 2 from the 2021 MPI primary sector capability report shows the changes in the primary industry support services between 2004 to 2019 (MPI, 2021), with a 36,000 increase in the number of workers in the 15 years. These numbers are in line with the 2014 MPI report indicating an increase of about 30,000 support service workers were needed by 2025 (Bell, Grimmond, & Yap, 2014).

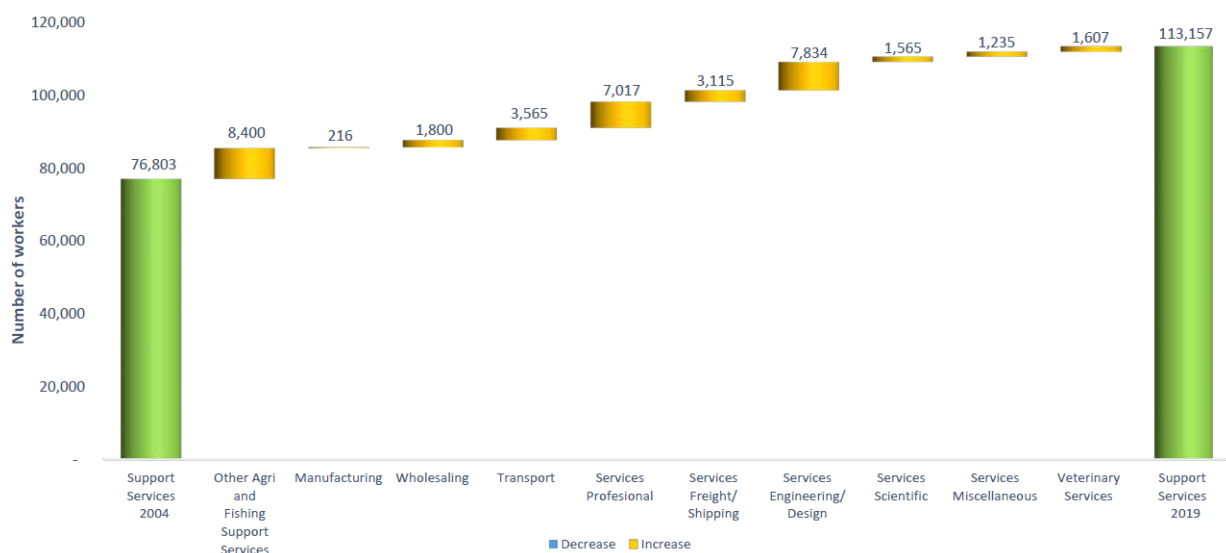


Figure 2: Change in the primary industries support services workforce (2004 – 2019) (MPI, 2021)

## Current state:

While some reports have indicated fewer learners in agriculture and horticulture tertiary systems (Figure 3), interpreting this depends on how things are classified. This is concerning with the statements that a higher skilled workforce is needed (Bell, Grimmond, & Yap, 2014) and the poor retention rate of new entrants (Figure 4). Figure 3 shows the numbers dropping from around 67,000 in 2013 to 45,000 in 2018 (Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019).

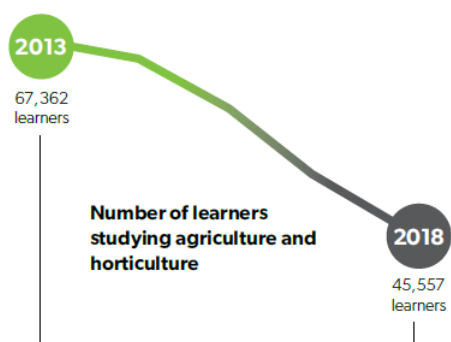


Figure 3: Number of learners studying agriculture and horticulture (Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019)

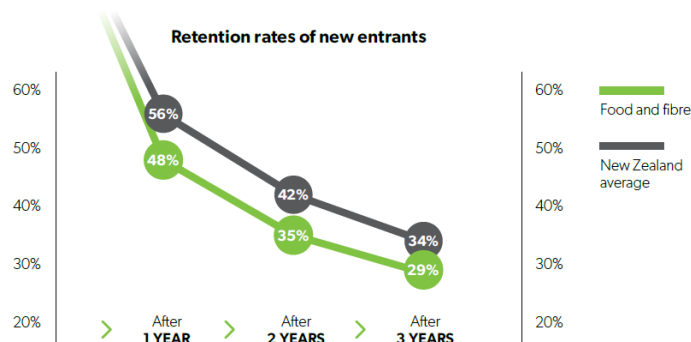


Figure 4: Retention rates of new entrants (Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019)

The PWC Food and Fibre insight report from 2022 showed a dramatic 77% decrease in students since 2012. Looking into these numbers further, it couldn't be identified how they were collated (Education Counts, 2022), but likely differences in the methodologies. The number of enrolled students in Agriculture, Environment and related tertiary studies is summarised in Table 1 (Education Counts, 2022). Table 1, along with personal communication with some universities, has indicated increases in recent years, after some decreases in specific categories. While the totals for some of the categories in the data sheet were difficult to balance, there were indications of changes in certain subjects, allowing some general understanding of the course selection. Note that these were enrolments and not necessarily full-time students, but general trends can be seen.

Table 1: Total versus Diploma/degree and Post-graduate Domestic student Enrolments from 2012 – 2021 in Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies (including Farm Management and Agribusiness, Horticulture, Viticulture, Forestry and Fisheries), and breakdown by category. Adapted from the government Education Counts (2022) website statistical tables. The Colour gradient indicates the highest (green) and lowest (red) within the category.

Total vs Diploma/Degree and Postgraduate

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2021 # vs Av. 2012 - 2021 #
Total in Tertiary Training (1-10)	25,685	25,035	24,085	22,125	20,535	19,250	16,890	15,875	18,370	21,030	0.7% +
Diploma /Degree and Postgraduate (level 5-10)	8,260	8,620	8,660	8,815	8,855	9,395	9,085	8,580	9,065	10,690	18% +
Enrolments in level 5-10 relative to Total in Tertiary Training = 100	32	34	36	40	43	49	54	54	49	51	

By Category: Diploma /Degree and Postgraduate (level 5-10)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2021 # vs Av. 2012 - 2021 #
Agriculture	2,185	2,210	2,215	2,175	2,230	2,220	2,005	1,865	2,030	2,510	15% +
Horticulture and Viticulture	675	695	750	685	695	1,560	1,680	930	670	785	14% -
Forestry Studies	325	295	260	235	255	260	305	330	340	330	12% +
Fisheries Studies	155	170	180	175	185	165	120	170	145	185	12% +
Environmental Studies	3,660	3,630	3,335	3,650	3,780	3,435	3,320	3,775	4,310	4,810	27% +
Other Ag, Environmental and Related Studies	230	255	260	210	325	455	445	435	460	810	8% +
Farm Management and Agribusiness	1,030	1,365	1,660	1,685	1,385	1,300	1,210	1,075	1,110	1,260	3% -
Total	8,260	8,620	8,660	8,815	8,855	9,395	9,085	8,580	9,065	10,690	18% +

### NOTE:

**Total - all tertiary training (1-10):** including certificates (1 – 5), certificates and diplomas (5-7); Bachelor degree, graduate certificate and diploma (7); Honours degree and post-grad certificate and diploma (8); Masters (9); Doctorate (10)

**Diploma/ degree and post graduate study (5-10):** includes certificates and diplomas (5-7); Bachelor degree, graduate certificate and diploma (7); Honours degree and post-grad certificate and diploma (8); Masters (9); Doctorate (10)

The 2021 numbers look positive in many categories compared to averages over the past 10 years. There are large increases in subcategories of Agriculture Science and increases in Environmental Sustainability degree topics. The biggest decreases are in Animal Husbandry and Crop Protection, with a drop of 42% and 22%, respectively. While preference for these straight-line degrees has decreased, many of the mixed degree categories were up (Education Counts, 2022). The mixed degrees likely encompass a range of topics, including a basic understanding of the plant, soil, animal and farm systems. This may be suitable for students from agricultural backgrounds but possibly not for those without that experience. There is the risk that students that do these degrees or end up in agribusiness careers without an agricultural background may feel underprepared with general context and understanding when entering their careers unless they have some relevant practical experience. Further work is needed to understand risks around career development to support students who have not grown up on a farm or who do not come from an agricultural background.

### **Sector Approaches**

The Food & Fibre Skills Action Plan outlines some key focus areas for the success of a growing the sector workforce and can be relevant to graduate early career development (Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022, 2019). The focus areas included **knowledge, attraction, education, and employment**. There is the risk that some initiatives will fail to link successfully with commercial businesses. It cannot just be the action of government, industry groups and tertiary providers, as so much of the employee experience is delivered and dependent on the company or employer. This is highlighted in the KPMG 2022 agribusiness agenda, that companies are looking to consider in-house programmes rather than relying on industry solutions used in the past (KPMG, 2022). A report by Scarlatti (2022), also commented that there could be risks of not providing training and education at the level where it matters when companies are not fully engaged and in partnership with sector approaches.

Sector projects often only have funds for the limited time of the investment. After the funding, these can then be difficult to integrate and costly to run, with it challenging to value programmes with linked outcomes (Scarlatti, 2022). The Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA/GrowingNZ) is another example of an industry programme. They were founded in 2014 as a non-for-profit incorporated society funded by its members. It had wide support and investment from industry, educators, and the government but has recently been wound up and discontinued. The reasoning for this is not apparent but didn't appear to have any private companies as members (Growing NZ, 2022). A review of the website identified that it appeared to have run some excellent events and have resources that the members will hopefully continue to share and utilise.

### **Attraction and Retention**

General "primary sector" attraction programmes can be broad and lack clarity. There is the risk they may not be suitable to many agribusinesses, if there isn't strong connection between industry and companies (Brenton-Rule, 2020). There has been a focus on secondary education to attract to Food and Fibre sector training programmes or tertiary courses (GrowingNZ, 2018; GoDairy, 2022; DairyNZ, 2021; MPI, 2014; Brenton-Rule, 2020), but not a lot considering the retention and early career development needs, particularly with a focus towards retaining rural professionals.

Most company graduate programmes are a combination of attraction and retention focuses (Scarlatti, 2022). Summer work, internships, and scholarships are generally more about attracting into the area of study or career paths rather than retention. The exceptions are when mentoring, networking or summer work is promoted and utilised as an approach within a scholarship programme. Examples include DairyNZ with mentoring and networking opportunities (GrowingNZ, 2018) and various

Ravensdown scholarship’s that offer the potential for paid summer work if available (Ravensdown, 2022). HorticultureNZ also offered post-graduate scholarships with inclusive professional development programmes, conference registrations, workshops, networking invitations and connections to industry leaders (GoHort, 2022). Graduates with these experiences, will likely be more confident, networked, with a better industry understanding when entering the workforce. The GrowingNZ website provides a good database of scholarships, including summer internships, related to the primary sector, but it is uncertain whether it will be retained with the discontinued PICA.

The New Zealand longitudinal study didn’t identify that scholarships or summer work were used to obtain employment. Most early career employment opportunities were identified from the internet (44%), through family, friends, or acquaintances (23%), by contacting employers on their own initiative (20%), or being approached by their future employer (18%) (Tustin, et al., 2022). This difference may be due to the framing of how the survey questions were asked within the study. More recent work has shown that even though newer generations regularly use social media, it wasn’t as influential in attraction as engagement between students, teachers or parents with those working in the sector (Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022).

#### 4.1.2 Employer needs

##### Attributes

While **technical expertise** is important, **people-based** and **soft skills** are just as necessary. This was shown by Duker (2019), in Figure 5, with a word cloud showing key attributes of high-performing rural professionals. The larger words have higher importance, with **trust** being the highest, followed by **technical-expertise**, **relationship**, **empathy** and **adding value** for the top 5. These types of things would not all be the attributes that employers would look for in a graduate, but those they would hope to build and develop.

The so-called “soft skills” as opposed to technical expertise were also described in a paper by (Heaton, 2008). It indicated that employers should often consider the soft skills, rather than just technical ability that can be more easily taught within the role. This is consistent with other findings (Allen & Simpson, 2020; Gillespie & Bampasidou, 2018; Bowyer, 2022).



Figure 5: Attributes of a high performing rural professional (Duker, 2019)

Gillespie & Bampasidou (2018) reviewed a range of surveys, identifying several attributes of graduates that are important to employers. **Communication skills** are among the most important (Figure 6). Both studies ranked communication skills first or second, with other communications skills such as writing and oral presentations, in the top half. This is consistent with Bowyer (2022), with skills of interpersonal communication, creativity, critical thinking, writing, computer, teamwork, quantitative analysis, and knowledge of general business management all ranking before the first mention of an agricultural skill.

National Food and Agribusiness Management Commission (2004) Ranking of Skills, Abilities, and Experiences Sought in New Hires		Noel and Qenani (2013) Ranking of Attributes of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Graduates	
Rank	Skill, Ability, or Experience	Rank	Attribute
1	Interpersonal communication skills	1	Creativity
2	Critical thinking skills	2	Communication skills
3	Writing skills	3	Critical thinking skills
4	Computer skills	4	Teamwork skills
5	Culture/gender awareness/sensitivity	5	Knowledge of marketing
6	Quantitative analysis skills	6	Knowledge of finance
7	Knowledge of general business management		
7 (tie)	Oral presentation skills		
9	Knowledge of the food/agribusiness markets		
10	Knowledge of accounting and finance		
11	Intern/co-op experience		
12	Knowledge of macroeconomics, trade, etc.		
13	Broad-based knowledge in the liberal arts		
13 (tie)	International experience		
15	Foreign language		
16	Production agriculture experience		

Figure 6: Ranking of Attributes of New Hires by Agribusiness Employers, results of two studies (Gillespie & Bampasidou, 2018)

### Increased job changes

Businesses need to prepare for a **future with increased job changes**. Research suggests that about 60% of millennial employees will change jobs every 3 – 5 years (Tetteh, Spaulding, & Ptukhina, 2021). Another study of agriculture students showed similar findings, with 75% changing employers within the first four years of their careers (Wilkes & Burns, 2019). Other literature supports that it will become more common in the workforce (PWC, 2022; Brenton-Rule, 2020; Jenkins, 2019; Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022; Tustin, et al., 2022; Deloitte, 2021).

*“More millennials and Gen Zs would like to leave their employer within two years, compared to 2020”, Deloitte Millennial Survey (2021)*

The literature shows that job retention isn’t just a New Zealand challenge. While people are changing jobs more than past generations, there is positive insight that there are reasons behind these changes and that they are generally not taken lightly. A national U.S survey of food and agribusiness millennial employees found that “job-hopping” isn’t as common as in other non-agriculture sectors (Tetteh, Spaulding, & Ptukhina, 2021). The main reasons for leaving were **a lack of opportunities for career growth and advancement**. With the New Zealand food and fibre sector being relatively small, this is a real risk, but concern needs to be considered specific to individual businesses. Businesses need to look at their roles and understand the turnover challenges specific to them. If the opportunities for their employees are real, and they cannot be met within the company within suitable timeframes, then movement elsewhere is likely. There is a chance that this could be more likely to occur in smaller companies, or ones with a flat structure with not the ability for diversity in roles, although there is conflicting literature on this. Heaton (2008) identified that there were many reasons for the lack of retention and that smaller businesses could sometime offer more tailored approaches to their employees rather than just being one in a number of graduates.

Businesses need a reliable workforce to ensure reliability of customer outcomes, productivity, and other efficiencies. **Communication and aligned expectations** are important. The literature indicated “job hopping” would be more likely from a **lack of direction once in a role** (Brenton-Rule, 2020), or from a **difference in expectation** versus the reality of a role (Heaton, 2008; Vaughan, 2010). Achievement of short and longer-term goals and aspirations, work-life balance, a good relationship with management,

and health care benefits were all things that improved employee satisfaction and improved retention (Tetteh, Spaulding, & Ptukhina, 2021).

**Stability** benefits other employees, as if roles are not filled for extended periods, this can put added stress on others. Stability often means there is built technical expertise and a more established culture. Having experience within a team with a **good team culture** can then be shared and passed on to new employees. The “**relationship**” attribute is also a long-term thing and is built over time and maintained (Duker, 2019). For these reasons, loss of employees can cause big disruptions to both other employees, clients, or others in the business supply chain, as many rural professional roles are built around relationships.

### **Barriers for businesses to invest in new employees**

A survey of NZIPIM memberships and other rural professionals identified barriers to taking on new employee consultants (Brenton-Rule, 2020). The main concern was the **uncertainty of workflow**; with the **shortage** of recruits, the **costs** and **time** needed to train them closely ranked behind. It also identified an increase in farm consultants working in firms or partnerships as opposed to sole operators, with 68%, up from 52% five years prior. This trend fits with other reports of increasingly complex demands of technical skills in these types of roles, and the observed value in linking with more people and “expert – expert” interactions, as described by Phillipson (2016). Working in firms rather than sole operators may help with some of the risks around taking on new graduate employees. Other concerns identified from the NZIPIM report regarding the time needed to train graduates could also be overcome when in a larger business by allowing the time to be split across more employees.

**Business size** could be a barrier or potential limitation to opportunities graduate early career development. Small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can find it challenging to match graduate remuneration from larger businesses (Heaton, 2008), but there are also different benefits. The smaller size often meant there could be more of a connected feeling across the business for graduates, and potential for closer mentoring rather than being one of many graduates in a large firm. These different benefits need to be communicated as a package to graduate employees. The things that are benefits to one graduate could also be challenges and negative to another. SMEs need different strategies and approaches than larger firms. Larger firms, such as Fonterra, can provide a range of roles and **variety** for graduates to experience. Usually, the exchange of talent could be more common within large and global companies, while SMEs face challenges. With generally flatter structures, in SMEs you may get more variety or responsibility within individual roles, rather than having to change positions to achieve this.

#### 4.1.3 Employee needs

New employees currently entering the workforce are predominantly described as Generation Z (GenZ). Coates (2022) identified that while there had been a lot of research by past Kellogg participants (Bell, 2018; Crouch, 2021; Lough, 2019; O’Sullivan; Tait, 2019), industry and government organisations about attracting GenZ to the Food and fibre workplace, there has been little on the transition into, and retention within the workplace.

---

*Get ahead - Get along - Find meaning. Master motives Robert Hogan 2000*

---

The majority of university students do not know what particular job or career they want (Vaughan, 2010; PWC, 2017). Most agricultural degrees cover broad content allowing broad potential career paths. What people want to do in their lives is driven by their “why and purpose” and “Master motives”.

Assisting employees to **understand themselves** can be valuable. There have been identified benefits from connecting with industry-orientated clubs (Bampadidou, Grogan, Clark, & Sandberg, 2016). Business interactions and work placements throughout degrees can provide further exposure to career options and increased likelihood of **aligned expectations** between employers and employees about roles or careers (Heaton, 2008). A “**misalignment of expectations**” can be an issue (Coates, 2022).

**Clear communication and feedback** is needed so both parties understand progression opportunities and the realistic **timeframes**. Employers should be proactive to engage in a conversation regarding employee goals and assisting in a career path plan is highly valuable. An employee’s progression may not be visible to them, even though their manager may think they see a path for them. Employees will look to self-manage their careers if there aren’t proactive discussions about future development or training. If employees don’t have visibility within the organisation, this will lead them to look elsewhere (Heaton, 2008). A successful graduate programme needs to ensure there are career conversations on progression that are people focused and focused on the individual, not just because the last graduate did it a particular way (Coates, 2022; PICA, 2019). **Coaching** questions can be used for career conversations and is identified as preference by recent generations as a leadership style (Jenkins, 2019).

While **remuneration** is increasingly important with higher cost of living, and a short labour market, graduates are a part of the market where they may be prepared to accept lower pay in return for **learning and development opportunities** (Heaton, 2008). Other considerations often include company size (small or large could suit different graduates with different aims), company **culture** and location (Coates, 2022; Jenkins, 2019; Robert Half International, 2008).

Some graduate programmes are a fixed term. For this type, there is a need to ensure the employees are well-networked to attain other options following. The risk of a lack of **job and financial security** can be daunting (PWC, 2017) and may result in employees making rushed career choices that are not the right fit. Even in a fixed term graduate opportunity, the employer should still see a responsibility for supporting the employee to find their next role. Particularly if it is a tough employment market, with limited jobs.

Some international literature indicated that graduates increasingly consider an organisation's reputation and implementation of social corporate responsibility. This includes embracing factors of environmental and social governance and sustainability, in addition to professional development, job security, travel and work that provides stimulation, variety or a challenge (Graduate Careers Australia, 2022).

**Connections, people and networking** are highly important. Many job opportunities may not be advertised and rely on personal connection, or links, and may only be acted on if the right person arises (Tertiary Education Commission, 2020; Interviewed company, 2022). Connection is important not only within the business but to the purpose and values and the “why” of the business or their roles and what they are trying to achieve, or what their role supports, or how it contributes. Mentorship can also help provide that connection (GrowingNZ, 2018)

**Leadership** and **team culture** matters for employees. Rowarth (2013), reported on the employee’s key considerations in the workplace with the summary from Robert Half International (2008). From this work, the employer and management were critical to staff retention, along with working with good people and work life balance as highly important (Table 2). Employers must try have the dimensions of high-performance work systems: a **fair** promotion process, few status differences, accurate performance appraisals, regular constructive feedback on performance, information sharing, **inclusion in decision making** (Rowarth, 2013).

Table 2: Employee considerations in the workplace (Robert Half International, 2008)

Requirement	Score (out of 10)
Working with good manager	8.74
Fun people	8.69
Work-life balance	8.63
Short commute	7.55
Green company	7.42
Nice office	7.14
Technology	6.89

**Learning new skills** is important. In a recent study 86% of new employees said that a personalised career progression programme would or may have better supported their transition into the workforce (Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022). While the desire for fast-tracked progression may not be realistic for all businesses, there are options they can consider. Ensuring the conversation is had and that there is discussion about progression is important. There could be options for rotations through different departments, or suggested learning opportunities. There are perceptions that GenZ employees want to **progress too fast** for what is available within a business and that most companies can offer (unless large). But is it the employee or the employer that has to find the solution? If this is something that these employees are ready for a new challenge, or like to stay **stimulated to retain engagement**, then perhaps businesses need to look at the way jobs are structured.

#### 4.2 Options and designs of early career development support

After initial undergraduate education, many first careers require initial on-the-job training or additional graduate education. Some careers require professional practice, or accreditation and upskilling throughout a career is common.

The Food and Fibre Agribusiness sector in general has a non-coordinated approach to training. There are many providers, including formal and informal ways this training can happen, and different structures for success (Fox, 2010; Vaughan, 2010). In terms of looking into choices and approaches, there wasn't much specific New Zealand literature with a focus on the Agribusiness sector for early career development, although there are some examples internationally (Henneberry, 2020; Wilkes & Burns, 2019).

A lot of the literature describing the process, planning and outcome has been from examples in other sectors (Fox, 2010; Robertson, 2011). There is some New Zealand (Vaughan, 2010; Robertson, 2011) and International literature on general career support, where key themes that can be drawn from (PWC, 2017; Allen & Simpson, 2020; Heaton, 2008). There is a need for more specific understand for rural professionals, and there are examples of smaller specific study sets from universities.

The "CAP Model" shown in Figure 8 can be used as a good visual for considering factors that contribute to employability for students to consider throughout their tertiary degree. These include career management, academic and personal attributes, as well as showing the involvement of personal, career and industry learning all contributing (Brent, Sanger, & John, 2017).



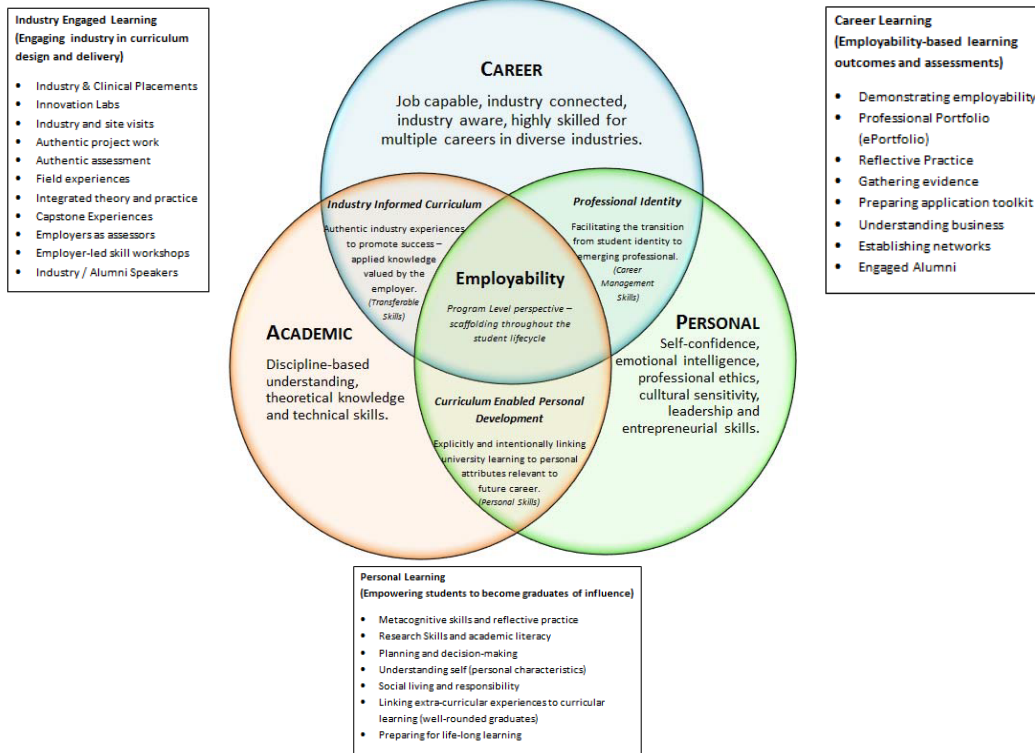


Figure 8: Cap model: Career management, Academic Skills, Personal Attributes (CAP) model for employability (Brent, Sanger, & John, 2017)

#### 4.2.1 Graduate programmes

A graduate programme (also known as a ‘graduate scheme’ or, occasionally, ‘trainee programme’) can be considered a fast-track career path, that allows opportunities often across a wide range of areas of a business and allows exposure and experience across them (Scarlatti, 2022).

It is often a set period, and an entry level position. Some are fixed term contracts, others are permanent employment, with a clear career ladder. It is generally easier for larger businesses to operated successful graduate programmes. The key difference between graduate programmes and other graduate jobs is that the programmes are structured and involve a core element of training.

The topic of career ladder or pathway is more of a traditional approach and has some limitations for what can be broad agribusiness careers. This may suit particular roles within an agribusiness, such as consults firms, where there is set accreditation and development achieved. There could be challenges whether the path is suitable for everyone in terms of time frames, skills needed or key strengths. If it is too structured is there the risk of missing opportunities or failing to adapt to the changing needs of workplace or clients. But there is value in being able to show some example pathways.

Graduate programmes include a salary (which may be scheduled to rise at certain points during the tenure), and usually involve rotations, and typically last between 12 and 24 months. These programmes are used by companies to **attract** highly competent graduates with great promise, investing in a long-term vision of these individuals as future leaders and specialists within the organisation. Due to the long-term focus of these graduate programmes, often they suit companies that have a particular type of structure and roles. For example, those that may have regular turnover of staff, or areas always needing to keep recruiting. Some other reasons for graduate programmes, are when the turnover of employees

has the potential to cause disruption for the business, whether it be decreased client satisfaction, or client service, or the time needing to learn and grow into a role (Give A Grad A Go, 2020).

The Fonterra Graduate technical programme is possibly the longest running food and fibre sector example in New Zealand and is highly regarded. This has been running for 40 years and involves full time graduate employees completing a range of practical placements across the business, while also being supported to complete a Masters in Dairy Science and Technology. This would suit people with a science and technology approach, but they also have examples of different set ups for business. A programme with further formal study is not a path that all graduates may want to take, but this is an example where it works well for the skills they require and are wanting to build.

There are examples of graduate programmes across a range of sectors in New Zealand, and a range in the food and fibre sector.

New Zealand examples:

**Private company:** Most examples are with larger companies (e.g Banks, meat companies), but there are some examples in smaller companies, such as graduate farm advisors, or trainee programmes for field staff.

**Processors:** Fonterra has a range of options from their business or technical graduate programmes., to summer internships, agribusiness programmes and a research and development programme. There are other examples with ANZCO Foods, Silver fern farms future talent programme, including a graduate career programme

**Agri-insurance:** FMG graduate programme

**Public:** There are examples of MPI graduate programmes and other government examples such as the annual MFAT graduate policy officer (MFAT, 2022) and MBIE Policy graduate programme (MBIE, 2022).

**Industry:** DairyNZ (not offered 2022), FAR Industry Graduate programme, HortNZ Industry Trainee Scholarships, HortNZ leadership programme. (GoHort, 2022)

**Fertiliser:** Ballance Sales Internship programme and Ravensdown development programme.

**Banking:** Rabo Bank; ANZ, BNZ and ASB graduate programmes

#### 4.2.2 Mentoring programmes

Mentoring allows you to learn off others (Robert Half International, 2008) and can be a formal or informal relationship. Some larger companies offer these internally to facilitate the connections, or there is the potential for external mentors. Mentoring is also available through examples of the DairyNZ undergraduate scholarship and is a key part of the value for students to assist in being prepared to succeed through university and into careers. Other examples include a range of HortNZ post-graduate scholarships (GoHort, 2022). The DairyNZ Undergraduate scholarships were introduced in 2001 (GrowingNZ, 2018), and have supported 300 graduates. While it has not been continued since 2021, and they no longer award the scholarship, the 20 years of its inclusion has helped many.

#### 4.2.3 Internships

Internships are often taken through a period of study before completing a degree. While often a short period for around three months during a summer holiday, students can both gain valuable work experience, but also understand about different roles and the types of tasks they enjoy, but also insight in to different company fit. They can enhance employability (Wolfram & Ahrens, 2022) and provide a good level of work experience and understanding of future roles (Heaton, 2008; Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022). New Zealand sector examples include the DairyNZ summer internship programme, which is often part of their scholarship programme. Many research institutes offer similar things, such as AgResearch, Fonterra or private company summer work. While there isn't a specific terminology, Ballance has a Sales Internship programme to prepare for their Nutrient specialist roles within their sales team. While called an internship, these are full-time employees and within six months,

aim to provide them all the grounding to fast-track them into Nutrient specialist roles within their sales team.

#### 4.2.4 Sabbaticals or Secondments

Sabbaticals and secondments are similar, with either an external or internal temporary transfer to another position. These are often in the same company and are more common in larger businesses. Sometimes the change in jobs is not internal, but with other aligned companies, or allows the employee the opportunity to do some study or topics relevant to their role or company. There could be challenges for this in companies with intellectual property or where there is the risk of competition. Private company employees having secondments to industry organisations may or may not be suitable depending on conflicts of interest in the role.

As discussed in section 4.1.2, the exchange of talent is often more evident within large and global companies, while SMEs face challenges. The European Union (EU) has a secondment scheme for small and medium enterprise businesspeople. This relatively new initiative launched in 2021, following a successful pilot scheme between 2015 and 2017. It is about exchanging skills and knowledge and involves between country exchange of staff, with financial support from the EU (Mobilise SME, 2022). This programme is not targeted at graduates but could be a good option to consider in the early career stages. Nuffield scholar John Foley mentioned additional benefits of this type of programme around opportunities for collaboration for science and innovation and options to create international researchers and businesspeople from our New Zealand talent (Foley, 2022). John highlighted through the people he interviewed that many later stage career people had opportunities for international experience early in their careers. This often had more of a strategic focus for the country or organisations and was invaluable creating networks and long career value. There were examples given from the early 2000's where Prof Hamish Gow ran a pilot programme, and Lincoln University students completed a Master's degree at American universities (Foley, 2022). While it hasn't continued for many years, there are indications that it is currently being planned again. There would be many logistics and relationships to build to ensure the students had a smooth and valuable experience. For long-term outcomes, there must be a strong drive and likely the right person pushing to make it happen, as there is a range of complexities with across country exchange. It should be noted that there is still the continuation of the study abroad schemes for mainly undergraduate students and international university relationships (Lincoln University, 2022; Massey University, 2022).

#### 4.2.5 Connecting to industry groups

Connecting to industry groups can be valuable for networking, learning, and development. Groups such as NZIPIM (New Zealand institute of primary industry management) have multiple development events, and a recent leadership development forum has been set up for early (NZIPIM, 2022). This forum aims to increase rural professionals' leadership capability and skill sets within their membership. There is a membership cost, but networking, connection and education are valuable. In recent years there has been the option for student memberships to NZIPIM, which are free. In addition, once the graduate finishes the degree and in the first year of work, can carry on the free student membership for a year. There includes a career pathways section on their website, and an area with a few suggested courses.

The New Zealand Greenhouse Gas Research Centre has run outreach programmes since 2019 in partnership with NZIPIM and an AgFirst consultant (NZAGRC, 2020). Their climate change training programmes for rural professionals has had nearly 500 people attend, and there are both climate change seminars and advanced modelling workshops (NZAGRC, 2020). Upcoming sessions are fully booked, indicating the interest in ensuring people are feeling up to date with changing areas of our sectors, and is available for members and non-members of NZIPIM, and options for both free and paid

training to upskill in things such as FARMAX. Other suggested connection points include Young Farmers, Regional Young Professionals groups, Women in Agribusiness NZ, Arable Y's, Rural Women NZ, NZ Grassland Association.

#### 4.2.6 Sector or collaborative graduate programmes

The wider Food and Fibre sector has had a few examples of sector based graduate programmes. Horticulture New Zealand had a highly regarded leadership programme and their prior graduate programme that included international experience (Rural News Group, 2015). An international example of a sector graduate program is MDS from the UK food sector (MDS, 2022). This cross-sector scheme had many things that I thought could be of value in New Zealand and is a good example of a collaborative scheme (Thorley, 2013). It is a not-for-profit membership organisation founded in 1986, with over 25 companies established over 25 years, supporting a centralised recruitment and development programme. There is qualification alongside the programme, and it includes a range of secondments with member companies over 18 – 24 months, supported learning and development and local relevant accredited qualification.

Is there potential for a collaborative graduate programme in New Zealand, or more aligned supportive programmes for in-career training? This may allow employees the permission to explore outside their organisation or team and form a strong base for a long career. Would there be issues with **loyalty**? By being open and able to have the conversation about wanting to understand a range of job opportunities doesn't mean an employee is not committed, but the open conversations are important. Allowing co-ordinated programmes, whether formal training or not, can allow upskilling and build social and industry networks (Brenton-Rule, 2020). Collaborative approaches have been suggested prior (Tait, 2018), but the challenge is the organisation and coordination of such a programme and considering the costs and benefits (Brenton-Rule, 2020) in a relatively small country and sector. One approach mentioned could be integrating better with corporate talent programmes and connecting businesses from fertiliser and seed companies, meat and dairy processors (Brenton-Rule, 2020), consultants and regulatory groups such as councils and support agencies.

#### 4.2.7 Utilisation of micro-credentials or short courses

The use of shorter form learning opportunities is increasing in New Zealand and worldwide. A recent Australian survey of the career paths of agriculture graduates from the University of New England indicated that over half of respondents had engaged in additional study from short courses to PhDs in their first four years in the workforce (Wilkes & Burns, 2019).

In New Zealand, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has encouraged upscaling of successful initiatives and the development of micro-credentials for the Food and Fibre sector (TCE, 2020). These are mainly through providers such as primary ITO (or its now new combined agency). When investigating the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) website, there wasn't a lot of information or ease of access for locating this information and opportunities. The EU is in the implementation phase of a similar type of micro-credentials to offer personal and professional development in a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the needed knowledge, skills and competencies (European Education Area, 2022).

Relevant short course options are available here in New Zealand and abroad. Massey and Lincoln Universities have options, some of which can be taken online and remotely (Massey University, 2022). An international example is UC Davis, Continuing and Professional Education programmes (UC Davis, 2022), with options relevant to some sectors. These programmes connect working professionals, businesses, and students from around the world to the knowledge and resources of the education institute. There is also the example of the UC Davis plant breeding academy courses. Even with these on

offer, there is still a time commitment, and for success, there needs to be enough time within the employee's workload to fit in such commitment, particularly when these are new or different topics.

Non-formal training could add great value to personal and professional development, such as courses from the Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) or the options to attend field day and technical workshops, such as Beef + Lamb's Winter grazing workshops; and DairyNZ MilksmartPro workshops.

### 4.3 Suitability of a graduate programme

The benefits of a graduate programme are many. They are often a sought-after position and can fill valued roles with top talent. Below summarises some of the key benefits (Give A Grad A Go, 2020):

- **Good insight into the company and awareness of areas to specialise:** Often, they involve experiencing different parts of the organisation and can be quite a broad base while allowing the discovery of areas of interest for the graduate.
- **Structured training:** They are often clearly defined with key areas to learn and develop through on-the-job training.
- **Visible career progression:** They may allow greater visibility into career progression based on prior graduates' pathways and may identify skills needed to progress into different promotions.

A company with a graduate programme often shows they have thought about talent development and progression within the business. This may be a new or developing approach for some companies, and aspects supporting early career development may be happening but not through a formal or optimal system.

It needs to be tailored for both the company and the graduate. Companies need to look at their roles and consider the careers of their staff. If the roles are framed and structured well, progression can be more important than promotion. Suppose companies are getting a 2 to 3-year churn of people, which is disruptive to their business or other employees. In that case, they need to look at the role and understand whether they are just stepping stone roles or those that could be the type of roles to incorporate a graduate or a different approach. The roles must be valuable to the company, but also with good intentions for the graduate's career so that the relationship is beneficial both ways.

## 5.0 Key findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Analysis

The following sections summarise some key thoughts from the literature review and connect the ideas and themes identified from the interviews. Appendix Three includes a diagram of a summary career pathway and movement created from considering the literature and interviews. It highlights the fluid nature and multiple options for pathways that can be taken in a career. While this report has focused on early career development, it had identified the need for also considering that next step supporting the phase of the five to 15 years mark in the sector to keep them engaged.

Tables 3 and 4 below summaries the key themes, draw from findings from the three groups interviewed. The words in bold were those most mentioned frequently across a number of the interviews. Where ideas were common across groups, they are shown by the join columns, versus individual ideas which were not expressed are kept in individual columns. An "X" is used to indicate where no ideas were specific for that group.

Table 3: Themes important for early career development:

Theme	Early career (< 5 years)	Early to mid-career (5-15)	Companies
Connection	<b>People; networks; Business understanding;</b> consumers; customers <b>technology</b> , part of a team		Connection within the business. Mentor
Ownership	<b>Ownership</b> , Responsibility, projects, allowed a voice		Projects
Understanding self	X	Mean, drivers, what is within and out of control, attitude, <b>personal brand</b> , values, lifestyle	
	<b>People skills</b> , working with others, <b>summer work, work experience, learning from others, technical,</b>		
Reflection and review	Reflection and review, <b>feedback</b> , questions, <b>taking time to learn</b>		
	X	X	Coach

Table 4: Themes for Graduate programme considerations

Theme	Early career (< 5 years)	Early to mid-career (5-15)	Companies
Finding the why and purpose	<b>Support</b> , clear structure, challenge, out of comfort zone. Connection in a new region	Business and employee <b>flexibility</b>	<b>Investment in talent</b> , Attraction, small sector. All company onboard, steep learning curve
	Understanding, basics and <b>fast track, stimulation</b> , varied workload, down time, <b>supportive peers</b> , learn off others, <b>varied attractions</b>		
	X	Co-design, <b>review, reflect</b> and adapt	
	<b>Unsure career path</b> , varied preferences, attraction, pay concerns. <b>Confidence</b> , asking questions, Awareness		Option for more reviews
Finding the right people, the right training, and being part of the team	X	Generational differences	X
	Culture, people being the connector; mentors, work experience, lecturers, <b>networks, coach approach, varied preferences, Team,</b>		
	<b>Flexibility</b> , be an individual, variety, mentor, <b>access to expertise</b> , facilitation or sales/relationship courses, support to understand skill sets, <b>visible career path, understanding self</b> , skills beyond current role		<b>Attitude</b> , critical thinking, providing the tools, do the doing

## 5.2 What is important for early career development

There were a lot of aligned ideas between the companies and early career employees interviewed for what skills are important and what can help in the early phases of a career. **Building technical expertise and learning off** others was mentioned by all. **Soft skills** were mentioned regularly and with a high focus on not just people skills and connecting and relating to others, but the importance of “understanding self”. This is consistent with Heaton (2008), and others discussed in the literature. The right support and connections were important. There should be consideration of the Kubler Ross change model (Figure 1, Whatfix, 2022) and the emotional change that is happening for new graduates. It is more than just starting a job. Often graduates have moved regions and are away from their normal support networks. Support needs to be more than just doing the job; ensuring employees have wider awareness and connection to the meaning and purpose was also important. They want to know they are contributing and providing value while building their skills. There was insight from companies about graduates wanting to **move fast in roles** or careers. From the graduate experience, it might not be that they want

to move faster between roles but want stimulation and to feel as though they are contributing (Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022).

---

*Attract and support people to gain the right experience to be in the right roles for the future.  
Focus on supporting strengths rather than necessarily building weakness*

---

### **Connection: People; networks; Business understanding; consumers; customers**

There was a difference in how an aspect of connection was considered between the employees and companies interviewed. Multiple employees mentioned the value of understanding and connection to the bigger picture. This included the company and wider market connection to understand the why and draw meaning for their roles and career direction. In contrast, the companies thought the connection being more about a good grounding and connection between other people in the businesses, but perhaps didn't go far enough with really understanding the purpose and "why".

### **Ownership**

The theme of **ownership** came up similarly from both early and early to mid-career employees. But it did lack from the general themes from the companies, as well as the literature. There was mention to involvement in special projects in addition to the business-as-usual ones and ensuring stimulating extras, but not necessarily about having specific ownership and responsibility for them. While it was mentioned by interviewed companies, and there are examples of these, it wasn't across the board, like with the employee perspectives. Coates (2021) did mention interviewees commented on the benefit of having a tangible project, which is consistent with my employee interviews.

### **Understanding self**

While it is important to know the company purpose and your customer and client needs, it also is essential for individual employees to know themselves, their meaning, and drivers. Understanding self was a theme mentioned by most companies and employees with more than five years within their role. It was not a theme identified with the newer employees (<5 years in career). They focused more on the people skills aspect and working with others, which was also important for employees with more than five years' experience and employers. The literature supported this general theme, and some differences in interpretation with the example of "self-awareness" discussed in the literature review (Allen & Simpson, 2020).

It was identified as important to build understand of what is within and without of employees control in terms of what they can do with work, values and attitude. Building your personal brand was mentioned by some of the more experienced employees, and also having the help to understand core drivers, including values, financial, and lifestyle and whether they align with the career path taken.

The interview process for a role can be beneficial for both the graduate and the employer. It is a chance to understand the graduate drivers and fit for the company. There are examples of "working interviews" or internships before the role to ensure throughout understanding of the role and company.

**Reflection and review** are very important through periods of extensive learning. Often people are busy doing the doing, but companies should consider the value of ensuring review and reflection is a regular part of the learning process and promoted in either formal or informal ways. This was mentioned in many interviews, with many suggesting they need to do it more.

### 5.3 Graduate programme considerations

Through the interviews, it became apparent that while many graduate programmes are thriving, a number are experiencing changes. This indicates the impact of tough financial times and business or strategic decisions. The decreased investment has the potential for flow-on effect if similar principles are not taken up to support graduate early career development in other ways. Those directly involved with the running and coordination of the programmes were very passionate and had first-hand experience of the value and impact on the individuals in the programmes.

A summary SWOT analysis of graduate programmes from an employer and employee perspective is included in Appendix four, outlining findings of the literature review and interviews.

#### **Finding the “why”**

The “why” is described as the purpose, drive and motivation behind what individuals or companies do. This is important for both the employee and employer to consider when considering either apply for graduate programme or when setting one up. Employers must consider their needs and why a graduate programme is suitable. It should ensure there is the graduate at the centre of the decision, and strong thought into the role and structure. This will require regular review through the implementation phase, and there can be values in co-design approaches. If there is a marketing and attraction gap for roles, the company must look at what they currently do, their approach, the specific jobs and how they are structured.

Comparing literature and the experience of the employees, there is not one type of graduate programme that suits all. The graduate needs to know what works for them (often through support of mentors or personal connections), and ensure they align with the company and the roles or opportunities. Trust and ensuring open communication between the expectations of the graduate and the employer is important. The expectations and the timeframes for development or opportunities need to be clear and reasonable.

It takes time to become well known and build a reputation as a good graduate programme or good graduate employers. Visible career progression and allowing and supporting employees to be part of industry events and leadership opportunities beyond the company are all good marketing for the company and programme.

So often graduate programmes stand out due to it being the people that connect to students. Whether it is family, mentors, lecturers, friends, or prior graduates talking about their experience and sparking the student interest.

#### **Finding the right people, the right training, and being part of a team**

The visibility of the career path and the opportunity for skill development was an important part of what attracted graduates and early career employees to graduate programmes. The networks and connections on offer were spoken of regularly, and there was constant mention of individual people often being the connector between a student, and them seeing a business or a graduate programme as an opportunity. This is consistent with the literature findings, that regularly initial connections and attraction is from direct engagement between the individual students and industry connections (Tustin, et al., 2022; Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA), 2022)

Being part of a team, building networks and being able to learn off experienced people was important and valuable for early career employees. While there are suggestions that businesses need to consider differences in changing generations, from the interviews and literature review, while there is a difference in an overarching sense, there are indications that there can be just as much difference



between individuals within a generation “group”. When considering generational differences in a workplace, it is not about one generation being right or wrong with the ways jobs or tasks are done, it is about them all complementing and working together. Teamwork and culture are a constant process to be maintained when there are new people joining a team or group that work together. Workplaces need to balance a range of priorities, ensuring employees are working together in functional teams, with enough exposure and vision to the wider purpose of their role as well as the organisation.

All employees interviewed did not initially have a clear view of their career path, and their view of their path has adapted through their career experience. The more companies can do to help their people to understand themselves, their strengths and what drives them, the increased likelihood for alignment for roles, or for deciding faster that a role may or may not be for them to minimise a lack of engagement.

Some companies interviewed indicated there was surprise with the level of competency of graduate employees. It was consistent across all interviews, that while there were certain skills sets still needing developed, in general, graduates and recent early career employees had good attitudes and grounding skills.

## 5.4 Section Summary

As outlined above, graduate programmes can attract new talent, but they must be well considered for talent retention. Graduate roles not part of a structured programme can be just as successful, but awareness is often through personal connections and word of mouth. It is important to take the time to understand what both the business and the employee need to ensure there isn't a miss match between expectations and reality. Businesses need to ensure they do not overpromise and under-deliver. Companies are often pleasantly surprised by the value graduates can add to the business, regularly exceeding expectations. It is important to ensure this value is realised and that the “new graduate” title doesn't limit employee's responsibilities or opportunities. Being given certain responsibility and their own projects to lead can be a good way to encourage proactive learning and engagement.

### **Employer recommendations for early career development:**

- Understand the “why” and aims/objectives of a graduate programme employees and employer.
- Take time during recruitment to understand individuals' drivers and interests to aligned expectations.
- Allow time for active review and reflection.
- Communicate openly and consider personalised career progression discussions
- Provide job clarity and some “stretch” challenges, responsibility or ownership of a project
- “Top up not tip in” expertise and knowledge, and attempt to coach not teach
- Wide company buy-in is needed, not just the graduates and the immediate team.

### **Employee recommendations early career development:**

- Take time to understand yourself, your drivers and your interests.
- Talk to people in various companies for real insight into the role, company, values and if they align.
- You might not get your dream job the first time. You will also likely not know what your dream job entails, and it might be something beyond what you are aware of or know.
- Consider the full package of what a role offers
- Talk to your employer. While they should be proactive, you cannot wait for them to lead if they do not know your career aspirations or haven't got the people or processes in place for employee-focused career planning.
- Bring solutions or ideas. You may or may not have leaders or managers that agree, but at least you have tried, and you won't be left wondering.
- Not everything is possible in the timeframes that you might want, but you can take your own steps to where you want to be

## 6.0 Conclusions

A career is a process, not a destination, and constant moving parts and balances exist. Early career experiences are one factor in retaining new talent or attracting them back later in their career. Support and connections are important and being able to have proactive conversations. Graduate programmes can help facilitate this, but it is often down to individual experiences with an employer, with considerations of balancing lifestyle, development and career aims. Businesses need to look at their situation and roles to understand the specific turnover challenges, and how to address these

Most students at university do not know or aren't aware of what their career path will look like. They will have general themes of perceived importance, and companies need to do more to promote options for summer work and internships to form relationships and understanding. Graduate programmes can be utilised as a good attraction for new talent, but they must be done well and well considered for talent retention. Graduate roles that are not part of a structured programme can be just as successful and sought out if students are aware of the opportunities, which is usually through personal connections and word of mouth. It is important to take the time to understand what both the business and the employee need to ensure there isn't a miss match between expectations and reality. Do not overpromise and under-deliver. Companies are often pleasantly surprised by the value graduates can add to the business, regularly exceeding expectations. It is important to ensure this value is realised and that the "new graduate" title doesn't limit employee's responsibilities or opportunities. Businesses should actively encourage the opportunity for fresh perspectives and operational ideas or solutions from new graduates or interns.

Even without the capability for a formalised graduate programme, all companies' interviews had the intent that investment in the future talent is important, whether through a formal programme or as a new employee. Promote open communication and a personalised career progression discussion.

Individual companies need to review and do what is right for their employee training, but there should be consideration of the bigger sector picture. The sector is small, so it is valuable to train employees well to provide grounding for future leadership, even if they go to other within sector roles for their career progression. This does not shut off opportunities that they will return later in their career.

## 7.0 Recommendations

### **Recommendations for businesses:**

- Have proactive open conversations on career progression.
- Describe example career pathway options, to allow employee visibility and consideration to their career aims and interest. Promote open feedback and reflection from this.
- Invest early in learning and development in communication and soft skills as well as technical skills.
- Undertake a strategic review of graduate roles within companies. Considering the structure, core tasks, and what else can be done for opportunities as a career package.
- Explore options for a collaborative event for Agri-graduates and early career employees within regions to foster and support early networking, promote connections, and build relationships.
- Investigate improved sector options for formal or informal early career employee training and consider supporting networking and providing mentoring support.
- Align more with university courses and have early and mid-career employees participate in networking events to share experiences and potential sample career pathways.

**Recommendations for early career employees:** seek out industry networking groups for stimulation and support, particularly if not receiving development or support within current company.

## Reference list

- Allen, D., & Simpson, C. (2020). Inquiry into Graduate Attributes: reviewing the formal and informal management curricula. *Journal of Management Education*, 330-358.
- Bampadidou, M., Grogan, K., Clark, J., & Sandberg, M. (2016). Career Skills: Perception of Importance and High Impact Learning Activities for skill development in Agriculture economics and agribusiness programmes. *NACTA Journal*.
- Bell, B., Grimmond, .. D., & Yap, M. (2014). *Future Capability Needs for Primary Industries in New Zealand*. Retrieved from <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/3893-Future-capability-needs-for-the-primary-industries-in-New-Zealand>
- Bowyer, S. (2022). Employing Business Majors for Careers in Agriculture and Food. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* , 61-75.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 77-101.
- Brent, G., Sanger, G., & John, R. (2017). A framework to embed employability initiatives initiatives in undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths programs. *Research and Development in Higher Education: Curriculum transformation*, 38-49.
- Brenton-Rule, T. (2020). *Red Meat Profit Partnership: Talent attraction final report*. Retrieved from RMPP: [https://www.rmpp.co.nz/site\\_files/13089/upload\\_files/RMPPTalentAttractionFinalReport.pdf?dl=1](https://www.rmpp.co.nz/site_files/13089/upload_files/RMPPTalentAttractionFinalReport.pdf?dl=1)
- Coates, I. (2022). *Retaining Rangatahi in the Red Meat Sector*. Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme report.
- DairyNZ. (2021). *Career and progression: Scholarships*. Retrieved from DairyNZ: <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/people/careers-and-progression/scholarships/>
- Deloitte. (2021). *2021 Millennial Survey*. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/nz/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-millennial-survey-2021-new-zealand-report.pdf>
- Duker, A. (2019). *How can rural professionals be more effective in this time of transformational change?* Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme.
- Education Counts. (2022). *Tertiary Participation: participation enrolements in predominant field of study*. Retrieved from Education Counts : <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-participation>
- European Education Area. (2022). *A European approach to micro-credentials: flexible, inclusive learning opportunities*. Retrieved from European Education Area: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials>
- Foley, J. (2022). *Science and Innovation in New Zealand Agriculture*. Rural Leaders: Nuffield New Zealand Farming Scholarship.
- Food and Fibre Skills Action Plan 2019-2022. (2019). *MPI*. Retrieved from <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/37751-food-fibre-skills-action-plan-webv2-pdf>

- Fox, A. B. (2010). Planning a graduate programme in public health nutrition for experienced nutritional professionals. *Public Health Nutrition*, 1479-1488.
- Gillespie, J., & Bampasidou, M. (2018). Designing agricultural economics and agribusiness undergraduate programmes. *Journal of Agriculture and Applied Economics*, 319-348.
- Give A Grad A Go. (2020, August 18). *What are the benefits of graduate programs for employers*. Retrieved from <https://www.giveagradao.com/au/news/2020/08/what-are-the-benefits-of-graduate-programs-for-employers/473>
- GoDairy. (2022). Retrieved from GoDairy: <https://www.godairy.co.nz/>
- GoHort. (2022). *Scholarships*. Retrieved from GoHorticulture: <https://gohorticulture.co.nz/scholarships/>
- Graduate Careers Australia. (2022). *Corporate social responsibility*. Retrieved from GCA: Graduate Careers Australia: <https://www.graduatecareers.com.au/corporate-social-responsibility/>
- Green, R. (2017). Levy oration - 2016: Lessons learnt and future opportunities. *Journal of New Zealand Grasslands* 79, 7-10.
- Growing NZ. (2022). *About us*. Retrieved from Growing NZ: <https://growingnz.org.nz/about-us>
- GrowingNZ. (2018). *GrowingNZ*. Retrieved from [https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/oldimages/Events/ResearchForum/2018/Presentations/08\\_SusanStokes.pdf](https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/oldimages/Events/ResearchForum/2018/Presentations/08_SusanStokes.pdf)
- Heaton, N. M. (2008). Graduate recruitment and development: Sector influence on a local market/ regional economy. *Education + Training*, 276-288.
- Henneberry, S. R. (2020). Quantifying impacts of internships in an international agriculture degree programme. *PLOS ONE*.
- Jenkins, R. (2019). *The Generation Z Guide. The complete manual to understand, recruit and lead the next generation*. .
- KPMG. (2022). *KPMG Agribusiness Agenda*. Retrieved from KPMG: <https://home.kpmg/nz/en/home/insights/2022/06/2022-agribusiness-agenda.html>
- Lincoln University. (2022, 10 30). *Study Abroad and Student Exchange*. Retrieved from Lincoln University: <https://www.lincoln.ac.nz/study/study-abroad-and-student-exchange/>
- Massey University. (2022). *Short course and professional development*. Retrieved from Massey University: <https://www.massey.ac.nz/study/find-a-subject-course-or-qualification/short-courses-and-professional-development/>
- Massey University. (2022, 10 30). *Study Abroad and Student Exchange*. Retrieved from Massey University: <https://www.massey.ac.nz/study/study-abroad-and-student-exchange/>
- MBIE. (2022). *Policy graduate programme*. Retrieved from Ministry of Business, innovation and employment: <https://jobs.mbie.govt.nz/go/Policy-Graduate-Program/4733410/>
- MDS. (2022). *Developing future leaders*. Retrieved from MDS: <https://www.mds-ltd.co.uk/>
- MFAT. (2022). *Working with us - graduate and intermediate opportunities*. Retrieved from MFAT: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/work-with-us/graduate-and-intermediate-opportunities/>

- Mobilise SME. (2022). *MobiliseSME*. Retrieved from <https://mobilise-sme.eu/about-mobilise-sme/>
- MPI. (2014). *People Power: Building capabilities to keep New Zealand primary industries internationally competitive*. Retrieved from <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/3892-People-Powered-Building-capabilities-to-keep-New-Zealands-primary-industries-internationally-competitive>.
- MPI. (2021). *Human capability in the primary industries data: Part 1 2004 to 2019 - an overview*. Retrieved from MPI: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/17638-Human-capability-in-the-primary-industries-Part-1-2004-to-2019-an-overview>
- NZAGRC. (2020). *Outreach: Rural professional seminars*. Retrieved from New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre: <https://www.nzagrc.org.nz/domestic/outreach/rural-professionals-seminars/>
- NZIPIM. (2022). *Leadership Development Forum*. Retrieved from NZIPIM: [https://www.nzipim.co.nz/Category?Action=View&Category\\_id=303](https://www.nzipim.co.nz/Category?Action=View&Category_id=303)
- Phillipson, J. P. (2016). Performing inter-professional expertise in rural advisory networks. *Land Use Policy*, 321-330.
- PICA. (2019). *Annual report for the primary industry capability alliance*. Retrieved from GrowingNZ: [https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/oldimages/AnnualReports/2019/PICA\\_annual-report-2019-sm.pdf](https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/oldimages/AnnualReports/2019/PICA_annual-report-2019-sm.pdf)
- Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA). (2022). *Generation Z (IGEN): Attraction and retention guidelines for the food and fibre sector. Primary Industry Capability Alliance Report*. Retrieved from GrowingNZ: [https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/research-page-files/Generation-Z\\_Report.pdf](https://www.growingnz.org.nz/assets/research-page-files/Generation-Z_Report.pdf)
- PWC. (2017). *Career and Skills Pathways. Research into a whole-of-system approach to enhancing lifelong career support mechanisms for all Australians*. Retrieved from VOCED: <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A78650>
- PWC. (2022). *Food and Fibre Sector insights - April 2022*. Retrieved from PWC: <https://www.pwc.co.nz/pdfs/2022/food-and-fibre-sector-insights-april2022.pdf>
- Ravensdown. (2022). *Scholarships*. Retrieved from Ravensdown: <https://careers.ravensdown.co.nz/students/scholarships>
- Robert Half International. (2008). *What Millennial workers want: How to attract and retain Gen Y employees*. Retrieved from [www.rhi.com/geny](http://www.rhi.com/geny)
- Robertson, L. S. (2011). Learning styles and fieldwork education: Students' perspective. *New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 36-40.
- Rowarth, J. (2013). Revitalising Communities to Sustain Grassland Research. *Proceedings of the 22nd International Grassland Congress*.
- Rural News Group. (2015). *HortNZ Expands Programme*. Retrieved from Rural News: <https://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/rural-news/rural-general-news/hortnz-expands-programme>
- Scarlatti. (2022). *Attraction and Retention Research Programme: Situational Analysis - Desk research*. Retrieved from Food and fibre cove NZ: <https://foodandfibrecove.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FFCoVE-A-and-R-Stocktake-report-19-Sep-22-final.pdf>

- Tait, S. (2018). "Young people today..." *Beating the statistics and holding on to the young talent in your agribusiness*. Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme .
- TCE. (2020). *Tertiary Education Commission: Food and Fibre sector investment brief* . Retrieved from Tertiary Education Commission: <https://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Forms-templates-and-guides/Investment-Toolkit/Investment-Brief-Food-and-Fibre-Sectors.pdf>
- Tertiary Education Commission. (2020). *Careers.govt.nz*. Retrieved from <https://www.careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/farming-fishing-forestry-and-mining/agriculture-horticulture/agricultural-horticultural-field-representative/>
- Tetteh, I., Spaulding, A., & Ptukhina, M. (2021). Understanding the job-hopping syndrome among millennial employees in the U.S food and agribusiness sector: a national survey. *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*.
- Thorley, M. (2013). *Retaining your talent*. Retrieved from <https://www.ofc.org.uk/sites/ofc/files/papers/martin-thorley.pdf>
- Tustin, K., Theodore, R., Gollop, M., Kokaua, J., Taylor, N., Taumoepeau, M., . . . Poulton, R. (2022). *Second Follow-up Descriptive Report: Graduate Longitudinal Study New Zealand*.
- UC Davis. (2022). *UC Davis: Courses & Programmes*. Retrieved from UC Davis: <https://cpe.ucdavis.edu/courses-programs>
- Vaughan, K. (2010). Learning Workers: Young New Zealand and Early Career Development. *Vocations and Learning*, 157-178.
- Whatfix. (2022). *The Kubler Ross Change curves in the workplace 2022*. Retrieved from Whatfix: <https://whatfix.com/blog/kubler-ross-change-curve/#:~:text=The%20Change%20Curve%2C%20or%20K%C3%BCbler,bargaining%2C%20depression%2C%20and%20acceptance.>
- Wilkes, J., & Burns, A. (2019). A decade of Agriculture Graduates' Employability and Career Pathways. *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education*, 2-13.
- Wolfgram, M., & Ahrens, V. (2022). One internship, two internships, three internships.... more: exploring the culture of multiple internships economy. *Journal of Education and work*, 139 - 153.

## Appendices

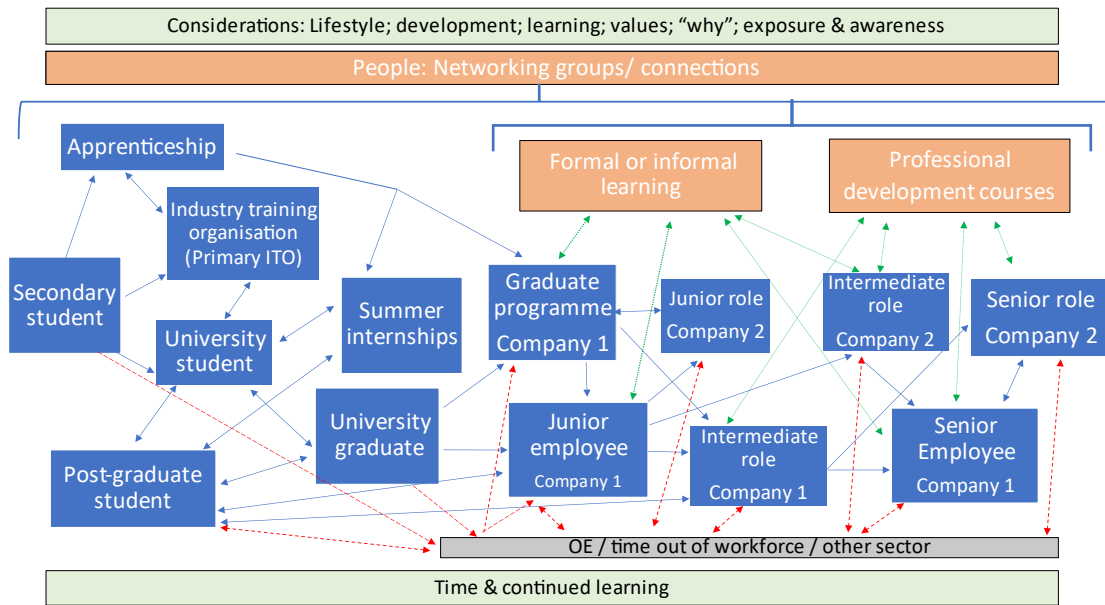
### Appendix One: Interview Questions Graduate and Early to Mid-Career Employees

- 1) What is your career background, including time since graduating or time in the sector?
- 2) What were key things that attracted you to your first employer following university?
- 3) How did any pre-employment networking or connections help in your decisions for your early career path?  
E.g. Summer internships/ Mentoring / industry networking groups/ NZIPIM / Scholarship support?
- 4) Was there any specific support in your early career (<2yrs) that made a difference in transitioning from university to work?
- 5) Were you part of a graduate programme?
  - a) If yes, what was your experience? What attracted you?
  - b) If not, did you consider one? Why/ why not?
- 6) What are your perceptions of graduate programmes?
  - a) Strengths / Weakness / Future Opportunities or challenges for graduate programmes
- 7) What is/ or was most important in your early career from a professional and personal skills perspective?
  - a) Are there any skills you wish you had developed sooner or had more support developing?
  - b) What does success look like for early career development of new graduates entering business (Employee perspective)
- 8) Based on your past and current experience, what skills will be important for the future workforce?
- 9) What professional development courses or micro-credentials have been valuable in your early career?
- 10) Do you have any thoughts on the challenges for early career development in smaller organisations?
- 11) What are your thoughts or comments about a collaborative industry approach for supporting early career development for our sector?

### Appendix Two: Interview Questions Companies and Organisations

1. How many employees does your business have?
2. Approximately how many graduates do you employ on an annual basis?
3. What is your approach for attracting and maintaining graduate talent?
  - a) Are there any challenges in this space?
4. Can you explain about your current graduate programme? (If no programme, then what done for early career employees)
  - a) How many people
  - b) Length
  - c) Full time or fixed term?
  - d) Any course credentials as part of the programme?
  - e) Is there any flexibility within the programme or examples of things being tailored for the individual graduates?
  - f) What is the main reason for the graduate programme? Why was it set up initially?
  - g) What adaptations have there been over time?
5. What features make the programme a success?
  - c) Employer and employee focus
  - d) Strength / Weakness / Future Opportunities or challenges for graduate programmes
6. Do you outsource any of the programme, training, or skill development?
7. Do you/ or have you considered collaborating with other synergistic companies for part of your programme?
8. What does success look like for the early career development of new graduates entering your business (employers' perspective)
  - What skills of graduates are most useful when joining your company?
9. What are your challenges for supporting graduates with early career development?
10. Have you seen any change in the skill sets or needs of GenZ graduates (Ages <25 years)
  - a) What skills will be important for the future early career workforce?
11. What are your thoughts or comments about a collaborative industry approach for supporting early career development for our sector?

### Appendix Three: Summary Career pathway and movement



- Blue line = career path movement
- Red dashed line = movement out of the workforce of sector
- Green dashed line = within career learning



## Appendix Four: SWOT Analysis of Graduate programmes

A summary swot analysis was completed from the findings of the literature review and interviews.

	Employer Perspective	Graduate or Employee Perspective
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attracting new people and ideas</li> <li>- Structure clear and supported</li> <li>- Promotion of company</li> <li>- Likelihood of right job / right fit</li> <li>- Wider market/sector benefit even if cannot keep.</li> <li>- Well-rounded employees with appreciation for the roles across the business.</li> <li>- Chance to ensure a greater connected business with more employees with broad understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Often broad topics and visibility across a wide part of the business, roles, business units and jobs.</li> <li>- Fast track career/ employer exposure.</li> <li>- Clear development plans</li> <li>- Exposure to a range of people and expertise from across the company</li> <li>- Building network</li> <li>- Support if moving to a new location</li> </ul>
Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk that people will be trained, then leave</li> <li>- Scale of the business needed to support the graduates beyond the programme</li> <li>- Only appeal to some people and not be flexible enough</li> <li>- Physical cost and how to value returned benefit or success</li> <li>- May encourage graduates to progress faster than there are opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitability depends on programme design and support and may not be a suitable speed for individual needs</li> <li>- May not suit if already know the career path or from prior experience</li> <li>- May not have a full-time role and job security at the end.</li> <li>- May not be as high paying and could be seen as more junior for longer</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider industry collaboration between synergistic companies to build experience levels</li> <li>- Workload help at key times if structured well, but it cannot be the only focus.</li> <li>- Consideration of job structures to promote/ encourage interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience a company for a period to see if they align</li> <li>- Awareness and feedback from other graduates who have been through the programme.</li> <li>- Wider sector connection</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loose graduates part way through programme if different levels of progression and development</li> <li>- Loss of IP or sensitive information</li> <li>- If a collaborative approach, the value to different companies may not be balanced</li> <li>- Potential to grow students too quickly without the time to develop required soft skills and a wider understanding of themselves and others</li> <li>- Risk quick growth could result in a struggle to maintain graduate engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If not structured well, there could be issues with success and support</li> <li>- Given just basic jobs and not pushed.</li> <li>- Risks if not given wider opportunities or kept within the bounds of a "graduate"</li> <li>- If there is not suitable support, there could be challenges</li> <li>- A negative experience can easily travel to other potential graduates.</li> </ul>