



**KELLOGG**  
RURAL LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAMME



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**“Not one more acre of Māori Land”**

*“Not one more voice lost”*

*.....inspired by Dame Whina Cooper*

**Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme  
Course 55 2026  
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I wish to thank the Kellogg Programme Investing Partners for their continued support.



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## Mihimihi

Tenei te mihi ki te runga rawa nana nei nga mea katoa.

Kia Ranginui e tu iho nei.

Kia Papatuanuku e takoto nei.

Kia koutou kua wheturangitia, haere, haere, haere atu ra.

Kia tatau te hunga ora, tena tatau, tena tatau, tena ra tatau katoa.

Me whakanuia ka tika! Nga wahine, nga tane I para I te huarahi kia tu kaha, kia tu tika, kia tu pono mo te painga mo tatau te iwi Maori I roto I te Ao hurihuri.

Ki nga wahine toka tu ahu matua, tenei te mihi I runga I te aroha me te hūmarie o te whakaiti.

Ki Te Tawa Kaiti Lands Trust e mihi ana ahau kia koutou mo te wero, te manaaki me ki akiaki ia hau ki te whai huarahi ki nga maunga teitei, ki nga whetu rawa.

Kia koutou Rural Leaders and Dairy Womens Network e mihi ana ahau mo ta koutou pūtea kia pai ai au te whai tenei matauranga hei whakapakari i toku hinengaro.

Nga mihi nui kia koutou te roopu o te Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme, ki te whakarite, ki te tautoko ki te akiaki hoki ia matau.

Nga tauira 55, tenei te mihi kia tatau.

Ki aku tīpuna, ki aku pakeke, ki taku whānau, me mihi, me mihi, me mihi! Nā koutou ahau i poipoia kia tū māia, kia tū pakari, kia tū māhaki i roto i tēnei ao.

*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.*

## Pepeha

Ko Taiarahia, Te Mauku, Taranaki nga maunga

My Mountains are Taiarahi, Te Mauku, Taranaki

Ko Ohinemataroa, Owhakatoro, Whaitara nga awa

My rivers are Ohinemataroa, Owhakatoro, Whaitara

Ko Tuhoe, Te Whakatohea, Te Atiawa, Ngati Mutunga nga iwi

My Iwi are Tuhoe, Te Whakatohea, Te Atiawa, Ngati Mutunga

Ko Ngati Rongo, Ngati Ira, Ngati Rahiri nga hapu

My Hapu are Ngati Rongo, Ngati Ira, Ngati Rahiri

Ko Taurarau, Waioeka, Owhakatoro, Owae nga marae

My marae are Taurarau, Waioeka, Owhakatoro, Owae

## Karakia

Whakataka te hau ki te uru, Let the wind fall from the west

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga, Let the wind fall from the south,

Kia mākinakina ki uta, Let the breeze be cool on the land,

Kia mātaratara ki tai. Let it be sharp and brisk on the sea

E hī ake ana te atakura, A new dawn rises,

He tio, he huka, he hauhunga. There is frost, ice and a cold breath

Tihei mauri ora. Behold the breath of life

## Executive Summary

Not One More Acre of Māori Land was the call of Dame Whina Cooper — a call to protect whenua, to stand firm, and to ensure that Māori authority was not further diminished. This project takes that call into the present and into the agri-sector: Not one more voice lost. It asks a simple but important question — kei hea taku reo? Where is the voice of wāhine within the spaces that shape this sector?

This report looks at how women engage with networks across Aotearoa's agri-sector, and what those networks mean for participation, leadership, and visibility. It is grounded in a kaupapa Māori approach that values lived experience, relationships, and connection to whenua. It recognises that participation is not just about being present. It is shaped by who you know, how you are connected, where you come from, and whether your voice is heard and taken seriously.

Women are active across the agri-sector. They show up, they contribute, and they support others. Many are the ones holding relationships together, connecting people, and keeping things moving behind the scenes. But this research finds that being active in networks does not always lead to influence. Women are often present without being fully recognised in leadership and decision-making spaces. Their contributions are real, but not always visible in the places where decisions are made.

This creates a clear tension. Wāhine are not absent. They are there, doing the work. Yet their voices are not always reflected in outcomes, direction, or authority. The issue is not a lack of capability or commitment. It is that the way leadership is recognised does not always align with the ways wāhine contribute.

This research is also shaped by history and whakapapa. As a descendant of Te Teira, Paramount Chief of Te Ātiawa, this research sits within a legacy of land loss and ongoing struggle for voice and authority. That history is not separate from the present — it continues to shape how Māori participate in sectors like agriculture, and how voice and ownership are experienced. Dame Whina Cooper's leadership remains a powerful reminder that voice must be protected and carried forward, often through collective effort and determination.

This qualitative study draws on semi-structured interviews with 16 women from across Aotearoa's Agri sector, including wāhine Māori, to explore how networks shape participation, leadership, and resilience, their experiences show that networks matter. They provide connection, support, learning, and opportunities. For many wāhine, networks are not transactional spaces — they are relational. They are about building trust, supporting others, and creating a sense of belonging. At the same time, the research shows that these contributions are not always recognised as leadership. Much of the work wāhine do sits outside formal titles or positions. It is seen as support, coordination, or "helping," rather than leadership in its own right. This makes it harder for that contribution to translate into influence or decision-making power.

The research also shows that participation is not the same for everyone. Time, whānau responsibilities, and work demands shape how and when wāhine can engage. For wāhine Māori, participation is also connected to identity, culture, and responsibility to whānau and hapū.

The recommendations in this report focus on making practical changes. Networks need clearer and more open ways for women to get involved. Participation needs to be flexible, so it works alongside real-life responsibilities. Leadership needs to be understood more broadly, so relational and behind-the-scenes work is recognised. There is also a need to ensure that wāhine Māori perspectives are part of how networks are designed and run, not added in later.

*Not one more voice lost* is both a reflection of what is happening now, and a call to do better.

## Acknowledgements

Tēnā koutou katoa,

This research is grounded in the voices, experiences, and whakaaro of wāhine who generously shared their stories, insights, and time. I acknowledge each of you — your courage, honesty, and leadership have shaped this work. I acknowledge the whānau, hapū, and communities who continue to uplift and support wāhine across our networks, our whenua, and our spaces of influence.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme, Rural Leaders, Lincoln University, and their partners and stakeholders for the opportunity, support, and challenge to grow through this journey.

A special thanks to Lyndsey Dance, Matt Hampton, Craig Trotter, Renee Walker, and Annie Chant for your unwavering commitment and dedication.

To my whānau — thank you for your strength, patience, and belief in me and in this kaupapa.

I also acknowledge the recent opportunity to host a group from Patagonia, including members of the Mapuche people — *Mapu* meaning land, and *Che* meaning people — as part of an Indigenous cultural exchange focused on farming systems. What became evident through this experience was the shared nature of our challenges — across land, culture, identity, and the ongoing impacts of resource loss. Despite distance, there was an immediate and enduring connection — understood in te ao Māori as *Ukaipōtanga*, a sense of belonging to place and origin.

This experience did not occur as a planned part of this research, yet its timing and significance brought deeper meaning to the kaupapa. It reinforced that the challenges explored in this work are not isolated, but shared across Indigenous contexts, and that these learnings carry forward beyond this research.

Embodied in the title of this report — Not One More Acre of Māori Land... Not One More Voice Lost. It speaks not only to our own context, but to a broader Indigenous reality where land, identity, and voice remain under pressure. I acknowledge Te Tawa Kaiti Lands Trust, where this kaupapa is carried through our values and upheld by our people — our trustees, our pakeke, and those who continue to guide this pathway.

To the relationships and partnerships across the agri-sector who walk alongside this journey — tēnā koutou.

Alongside this journey, it is with deep respect and aroha that I acknowledge a close colleague, mentor, and guide — your steady presence, grounded in manaaki, integrity, and unwavering support, has opened pathways and stood steadfast, quietly walking the journey — he mihi maioha kia koe.

Lastly, I am deeply humbled to have been named the recipient of the Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year Award 2026, as the first wāhine Māori to receive this honour. This is not separate from the research. It sits within the same trajectory — one grounded in wāhine empowerment, courage, and the ability to nurture and lead. It is also not an individual achievement, but a collective one — shaped by those who have contributed to the journey of Te Tawa Kaiti Lands Trust, and by the wāhine whose strength and leadership continue to shape the direction ahead.

Tēnei te mihi maioha ki a koutou.

“Ka ora ai te whenua, Ka ora ai te tangata”

‘When we care for the land, our people will prosper’



## 1.0 Introduction

"Not one more acre of Māori land, not one more voice lost."

This statement reflects both a historical reality and a continuing challenge for Māori. It draws directly from the legacy of Dame Whina Cooper and the 1975 Māori Land March — a movement that called for an end to the ongoing loss of Māori land and asserted the inseparable connection between whenua, identity, and voice. Led by Whina Cooper at the age of 79, the hīkoi travelled from Te Hāpua to Parliament, uniting Māori across the country in a collective stand against land alienation and cultural loss.

The significance of this movement extends far beyond land ownership. For Māori, land is intrinsically connected to identity, belonging, and authority. The loss of whenua represents more than economic loss — it reflects the erosion of connection, culture, and the ability to participate fully in society. The call of "not one more acre" was therefore also a call for the protection of voice, identity, and the right to determine one's future.

This connection to land and voice is not only historical — it is deeply personal. I am a direct descendant of Te Teira of Waitara, a rangatira whose actions became central to the land dispute that led to the outbreak of the First Taranaki War. The sale of the Pekapeka block (Phillips, 2016; Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, n.d.) contested by Wiremu Kīngi on the basis of collective ownership, was upheld by the Crown and led directly to conflict (Phillips, 2016, pp. 57–58).

The impacts of these events extended far beyond that moment. The resulting wars, land confiscations, and government policies disrupted Māori authority, economic stability, and social structures, with consequences that have continued across generations (Phillips, 2016, pp. 67, 71). This is not only a historical narrative — it is an inherited reality. Through whakapapa, I am connected not only to the event itself, but to the enduring effects of land loss and the conditions it has created for Māori participation, voice, and leadership today.

Dame Whina Cooper's leadership reflects the strength of mana wāhine in responding to these conditions. Through her role as founding president of the Māori Women's Welfare League, she contributed significantly to improving the social, economic, and health conditions for Māori women and their whānau. Her leadership demonstrated that influence is not confined to formal systems, but is enacted through service, collective responsibility, and the ability to mobilise communities toward change.

This understanding of leadership is also grounded in my own lived experience. I was raised within the influence of the Māori Women's Welfare League, shaped by the leadership and commitment of my mother. Her involvement began in Waitara, Taranaki, and continued in Whakatāne, before she went on to found the Te Huinga o Matariki Māori Women's Welfare League branch in Tāneatua.

Growing up in this environment, I was surrounded by wāhine who embodied leadership through action. They did not always hold formal titles, yet they carried significant responsibility within their whānau and communities. Leadership in these spaces was not defined by position, but by service — by showing up, supporting others, and sustaining the wellbeing of those around them. These were the environments that shaped my understanding of participation, where contribution was constant, collective, and often unrecognised.

My mother modelled these values daily. Through her, I came to understand leadership as relational, grounded in manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and collective responsibility. I was not only raised within these environments, but guided and led by her example. As a result, I carry these values with me. They are not separate from this research — they are embedded within it.



This experience extends across my wider whānau. My mother's first cousin, Teira (2021), reflects the same strength, values, and commitment to ensuring that Māori voice is retained within systems. Her work reinforces a critical understanding that remains central to this research — that participation alone does not guarantee that voice is heard, recognised, or able to influence outcomes.

Together, these intergenerational influences reflect a consistent reality. Wāhine Māori have long exercised leadership within whānau, hapū, and community contexts. However, their representation within formal governance and decision-making spaces remains uneven. This reflects not a lack of capability, but the conditions under which participation occurs and is recognised.

These lived experiences align with kaupapa Māori approaches, which position knowledge as relational, contextual, and grounded in lived experience (Smith, 2012; Durie, 2001). Within this framework, research is not separate from the researcher. It is shaped by whakapapa, relationships, and the environments in which we are raised. Participation is therefore understood not as an isolated act, but as something embedded within connections to whānau, whenua, and community.

Women contribute across a wide range of roles within the Agri sector, including on-farm production, governance, advisory services, environmental management, and community leadership. While participation has increased, it continues to be shaped by structural and relational conditions, including access to networks, recognition of contribution, and pathways to leadership (Alston, 2012; Shortall, 2020).

These conditions are not new. Historical analysis of the sector demonstrates that agricultural systems in Aotearoa were originally structured around male-dominated production models, where women's contributions were positioned in domestic and support roles rather than recognised as formal participation (Carter, 1986). This highlights that contemporary challenges around visibility and recognition are embedded within longer-term structural patterns.

While networks are often positioned as pathways to leadership and advancement, access does not necessarily translate into influence. Networks are not neutral spaces; they actively shape inclusion, visibility, and access to opportunity (Bourdieu, 1986; Alston, 2012). This distinction between presence and influence is particularly significant within Māori contexts, where engagement within systems does not guarantee that voice is acknowledged or sustained (Teira, 2021; Mead, 2003).

The purpose of this research is to:

- explore how women across the Agri sector, including wāhine Māori, access and experience networks
- identify the factors that enable or constrain participation in leadership spaces
- examine how networks shape visibility, recognition, and opportunity
- provide insights to support more inclusive, kaupapa Māori-aligned leadership pathways

Together, these aims reflect the central focus of this research — understanding not only how wāhine participate in networks, but whether that participation leads to recognition, influence, and sustained voice.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding — it is about what has been lost, what has been carried, and what must be recognised to ensure voice and leadership endure.

## 2.0 Aim and Purpose

The aim of this research is to explore how women across Aotearoa's Agri sector, including wāhine Māori, access and experience networks. The purpose of this study is to examine how these networks shape participation, visibility, and leadership opportunities, and to identify the factors that enable or constrain engagement. The research also seeks to understand whether participation within networks leads to recognition and influence within the sector, and how resilience is developed and sustained through these experiences.

### 3.0 Literature Review

This chapter explores the literature relating to wāhine participation in the Agri sector, with a focus on networks, leadership, and resilience. It brings together global frameworks, sector research, and Māori perspectives to understand how participation is enabled, experienced, and constrained.

Rather than examining these areas in isolation, this review considers how they intersect, and where existing frameworks do not fully reflect the lived experiences of wāhine, particularly wāhine Māori. A key focus of this review is to examine the relationship between participation and influence, particularly why participation does not always translate into visibility, recognition, or voice for wāhine Māori.

#### 3.1 Wāhine Participation in the Primary Sector

Women play a significant role within the primary sector, contributing to production, governance, environmental management, and community leadership. Despite this, research consistently shows that women remain underrepresented in formal leadership roles and decision-making positions (Alston, 2012; Shortall, 2020).

Global frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 (United Nations, 2015) and the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Alkire et al., 2013) highlight the importance of increasing women's participation through improved access to resources, leadership, and decision-making. These frameworks measure participation through indicators such as representation and economic contribution. However, while these approaches provide useful benchmarks, they primarily assess participation through measurable outputs rather than lived experience.

Within rural contexts, women's roles often extend beyond formal employment into caregiving, community coordination, and informal leadership. These contributions are essential to the functioning of the sector, yet are not always recognised within traditional measures (Shortall, 2020; Alston, 2012). This reflects a broader limitation within existing frameworks, where participation is valued in formal and visible roles but less so in relational and informal contributions.

This is reinforced by research on rural women in Aotearoa, which highlights the significant and often under-recognised contributions women make across both domestic and community life. Pitt (1998) found that rural women undertake diverse and demanding roles that support farm and family systems, with much of this work remaining invisible within formal sector structures. Historical analysis further supports this pattern, showing that agricultural systems in Aotearoa were traditionally structured around male-dominated production models, where women's contributions were positioned primarily in domestic and support roles rather than recognised as formal participation (Carter, 1986).

Historical evidence further suggests that participation is not consistent across regions. Records from Puke Ariki in Taranaki highlight a long-standing presence of organised rural women's groups, which supported connection, knowledge-sharing, and leadership development (Puke Ariki, n.d.). In contrast, similar levels of documented organisation are less evident in regions such as the Bay of Plenty, suggesting variation in opportunities for engagement.

This indicates that access to networks and opportunities for participation may be influenced by regional history, community structures, and the presence or absence of organised support systems. Participation therefore cannot be understood as uniform, but must be recognised as shaped by both structural and relational conditions that influence how women engage within the primary sector (Alston, 2012; Shortall, 2020).

### 3.2 Networks and Social Capital

Networks are widely recognised as important mechanisms for enabling participation, providing access to information, opportunity, and leadership pathways. While social capital theory positions networks as resources that provide access to information and opportunity (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), this perspective assumes that participation is primarily transactional and outcome-driven. In contrast, research examining engagement within Māori contexts demonstrates that participation is often relational, grounded in shared experience, cultural interaction, and mutual exchange rather than formalised structures alone (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

In practice, however, networks are not neutral. Access to networks is often shaped by visibility, confidence, and existing relationships (Alston, 2012). Participation within networks may therefore be uneven, with some individuals experiencing greater access than others.

Recent research further highlights that women often rely on informal, relationship-based networks for support and knowledge sharing, while facing barriers in formal agricultural settings (Parsons et al., 2026). These findings suggest that while networks are important for enabling participation, the type of network — and how it is structured — influences how individuals engage and benefit from them.

From a Māori perspective, networks are understood differently. Temara (2021) identifies that whanaungatanga and manaakitanga underpin network engagement, where relationships are central to participation and leadership development. Networks are not simply professional structures, but relational environments grounded in trust and shared experience.

Nuku (2023) reinforces this understanding, emphasising whakawhanaungatanga as the foundation of engagement, where relationships are built through connection, care, and responsibility to others. However, participation within networks is also shaped by structural conditions. Reti (2021) highlights that Māori engagement within agribusiness systems is influenced by governance structures, resource access, and capability constraints. These factors extend beyond formal systems into network environments, influencing who is able to participate and how. Further highlighting that networks operate at the intersection of relational values and structural realities, shaping both opportunity and access.

### 3.3 Gender, Leadership, and Invisible Labour

Leadership within the primary sector has traditionally been defined through hierarchical and individualised models that prioritise authority, visibility, and formal roles. These models do not fully capture the ways in which women contribute to leadership. This reflects broader rural dynamics where leadership and decision-making are often shaped by dominant groups, influencing whose contributions are recognised and valued (Pomeroy, 2021). As a result, women's participation does not always translate into visibility or influence, even where involvement is significant.

Women frequently undertake relational forms of leadership, including coordination, facilitation, and emotional labour. These contributions are essential but often remain invisible within traditional leadership frameworks. Temara (2021) demonstrates that wāhine Māori leadership is grounded in identity, relationships, and lived experience, rather than position alone. Leadership is expressed through connection to whānau, community, and whenua. Similarly, Nuku (2023) highlights that leadership is underpinned by values such as manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga, where responsibility to people and the environment is central.

However, recognition of leadership within formal systems does not always align with these expressions. Reti (2021) identifies that governance structures prioritise formal capability and technical expertise, which may not reflect relational leadership practices. This creates a disconnect between contribution and recognition, where leadership exists but is not always acknowledged within dominant sector frameworks.

### 3.4 Resilience in the Primary Sector

Resilience is commonly understood within the primary sector as the ability to adapt and respond to challenges. Traditionally, this has been framed as an individual capability. However, research increasingly suggests that resilience is relational and collective. Temara (2021) highlights that whanaungatanga and support networks are critical to sustaining wāhine in leadership roles.

Nuku (2023) reinforces that resilience is connected to wellbeing, incorporating values such as manaakitanga and wairuatanga, where care, support, and spiritual connection contribute to strength and stability. In contrast, Reti (2021) presents a systems perspective, where resilience is linked to governance capability, resource management, and structural capacity. Together, these perspectives suggest that resilience operates across multiple levels — individual, relational, and structural — and cannot be understood through a single lens.

### 3.5 Māori Perspectives on Leadership, Knowledge, and Participation

Māori perspectives provide an alternative framework that centres relationships, collective responsibility, and connection to whenua. Participation is relational, shaped through connection, shared experience, and whakawhanaungatanga. This aligns with research on engagement within Māori communities, where participation is experienced as meaningful through interaction and lived experience rather than structured or transactional processes (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Whā model offers a holistic understanding of wellbeing, encompassing taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (mental), taha wairua (spiritual), and taha whānau (social). This model reinforces that wellbeing is interconnected and cannot be separated into individual components. This aligns with how participation is experienced within Māori contexts, where engagement is shaped by multiple dimensions of life, rather than isolated roles.

Smith (2012) further emphasises that knowledge and participation are relational, grounded in whakapapa, and shaped by lived experience. Black (2000, 2014) reinforces this understanding, emphasising that mātauranga Māori is carried through lived experience, kōrero, and wānanga, where knowledge is not separated from people but exists within relationships and practice. Knowledge is therefore sustained through participation, rather than contained within formal systems.

Leadership within this context is expressed through service, contribution, and accountability to whānau, hapū, and community (Pere, 1991; Durie, 2001). Participation is therefore not an individual act, but embedded within relationships and responsibilities. Importantly, Teira (2021) emphasises that participation within systems does not guarantee that Māori voice is recognised or sustained. This highlights a critical distinction between presence and influence, where inclusion alone is insufficient without meaningful engagement and the ability to contribute to decision-making processes.

This distinction is not always reflected in dominant frameworks of participation. Global approaches often define participation through measurable indicators such as representation and access to resources (United Nations, 2015; Alkire et al., 2013), prioritising visibility over lived experience. In contrast, research grounded in relational and cultural contexts emphasises that participation is shaped through interaction, cultural connection, and shared experience rather than formal inclusion alone (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

This distinction is not always reflected in dominant frameworks of participation. Global approaches often define participation through measurable indicators such as representation and access to resources (United Nations, 2015; Alkire et al., 2013), prioritising visibility over lived experience. In contrast, research grounded in relational and cultural contexts emphasises that participation is shaped through interaction, cultural connection, and shared experience rather than formal inclusion

Temara (2021) reinforces these perspectives by identifying that wāhine Māori leadership is grounded in whakapapa, tūrangawaewae, and ūkaipōtanga, where identity and connection to place provide both the foundation and motivation for leadership. Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga are central

to this process, further emphasising that leadership develops through relationships rather than individual advancement. Similarly, Nuku (2023) highlights that values such as kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, and whakawhanaungatanga underpin Māori participation and leadership. These values emphasise care, responsibility, and relational accountability, reinforcing that engagement within systems is grounded in collective wellbeing and connection to whenua.

However, while these perspectives provide a strong relational foundation, they are not always reflected within formal sector systems. Reti (2021) identifies that Māori participation within agribusiness and governance contexts is shaped by structural constraints, including access to resources, capability, and decision-making frameworks, which influence both participation and recognition.

What this demonstrates is a fundamental difference in worldview. Participation is not about individual advancement, but about collective wellbeing, identity, and the retention of voice.

### 3.6 Structural Context and Indigenous Participation

To fully understand participation for Māori, it must be viewed within broader structural and historical contexts. Colonisation has significantly shaped access to land, resources, and decision-making structures, influencing how Māori engage within contemporary systems (Smith, 2012). These structural dynamics are further reinforced by research on Māori primary production, which highlights how colonisation disrupted Indigenous systems of governance and participation, concentrating power and marginalising Māori voices within contemporary sector structures (Ngā Uri o te Ngāhere Trust, 2023).

Participation is therefore not neutral, but shaped by historical and ongoing inequities that continue to affect access, visibility, and influence. While global frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 (United Nations, 2015) and the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Alkire et al., 2013) emphasise empowerment through participation and representation, they do not fully account for these structural conditions. Participation is not only shaped by access, but by the systems within which that access occurs, including governance structures and institutional expectations.

The Tūhoe settlement and Te Urewera Act (2014) represent a significant shift in recognising Māori relationships with land, redefining governance from ownership toward custodianship. These frameworks reinforce that whenua is central to identity, authority, and participation.

The Tūhoe Blueprint further reflects a focus on self-determination, intergenerational wellbeing, and collective development. These priorities contrast with global models that emphasise individual advancement and economic measurement, instead positioning participation within a broader framework of cultural continuity and responsibility. As articulated by Tāmāti Kruger, Indigenous relationships with land are grounded in responsibility rather than ownership, where the role of people is to “represent nature, not own it” (Kruger, n.d.).

This highlights that participation is inherently tied to identity, whakapapa, and connection to whenua. This connection between land, identity, and participation is also reflected in Māori leadership and engagement. Temara (2021) identifies that wāhine Māori leadership is grounded in whakapapa, tūrangawaewae, and ūkaipōtanga, where connection to place provides both the foundation and motivation for participation and leadership pathways.

Similarly, Nuku (2023) emphasises that participation is underpinned by values such as kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, and whakawhanaungatanga, where engagement is guided by responsibility to people, whenua, and future generations. These relational approaches reinforce that participation is not simply about involvement, but about maintaining balance, care, and accountability. However, these relational and value-based approaches are not always reflected within dominant sector systems.

Reti (2021) highlights that Māori engagement within agribusiness and governance contexts is shaped by structural constraints, including access to resources, capability, and institutional frameworks, which influence both participation and recognition. This connection between structure and lived experience is also reflected in the narratives of Tame Iti, whose advocacy highlights the enduring impact of land loss and the importance of retaining Māori authority, identity, and cultural continuity within contemporary systems.

Iti (2025) further emphasises that Māori participation is shaped not only by structural limitations, but by ongoing tensions between Indigenous identity and imposed systems, where presence within these systems does not necessarily equate to authority or control. This aligns with Teira's (2021) assertion that participation without influence risks reinforcing existing inequities, where Māori may be present within systems but not able to shape them.

What this highlights is that participation cannot be understood outside of context. It is shaped by history, land, identity, and systems of power, where both relational strengths and structural constraints influence how Māori engage, contribute, and are recognised.

### 3.7 Limitations of Existing Frameworks

While global frameworks such as SDG5 (United Nations, 2015) and the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Alkire et al., 2013) provide important benchmarks for improving gender equity, they rely heavily on quantitative indicators such as representation, resource access, and decision-making. These measures do not fully capture the relational, cultural, and contextual dimensions of participation. Participation is often measured through presence rather than influence, overlooking whether individuals are able to contribute meaningfully and have their voices recognised.

These relational dimensions are not easily captured through quantitative measures. As highlighted by Teira (2021), participation without voice risks reinforcing inequities, where individuals are included within systems but not able to influence them. This distinction between presence and influence is further shaped by structural conditions, where access to resources, governance systems, and institutional expectations influence how participation is recognised and valued (Reti, 2021). What this demonstrates is that current frameworks do not fully capture the experience of participation, particularly within Indigenous contexts, where relational, structural, and cultural factors intersect to shape how individuals engage, contribute, and are heard.

### 3.8 Research Gap

The literature demonstrates that while networks, leadership, and resilience are widely discussed, and while a range of Agri sector groups and opportunities exist for women, there is limited research that centres how wāhine Māori experience these environments in practice. Importantly, while participation is often assumed to lead to opportunity, existing research does not fully explain how, or whether, participation translates into influence, recognition, or sustained voice (Alston, 2012; Shortall, 2020).

Historical evidence from archival collections, such as those held at Puke Ariki, demonstrates that organised rural women's networks have existed in Aotearoa since at least the early to mid-20th century. Records from groups such as the North Taranaki Country Women's Institute and the Taranaki Agricultural Society Women's Committee illustrate structured and visible forms of participation and collective organisation within rural communities (Puke Ariki, n.d.). However, these accounts primarily document formal participation and do not fully capture how women experienced these roles, nor whether participation translated into influence or leadership within broader sector systems.

Similarly, resilience is often framed within the literature as an individual capacity, focusing on personal adaptability and response to challenge. This perspective provides only a partial understanding, as it does not fully account for how resilience is experienced collectively, nor whether participation within networks enables sustained engagement or influence over time. From a Māori perspective, this creates a disconnect. Participation is embedded within relationships to whānau, whenua, and



community (Durie, 2001; Smith, 2012), and is expressed through values such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga (Temara, 2021; Nuku, 2023). Within this context, resilience is relational and collectively sustained, however, there is limited research examining whether participation within networks leads to recognition, influence, or voice.

While existing literature acknowledges barriers such as time constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and competing demands (Shortall, 2020; Alston, 2012), there remains limited understanding of how these factors shape participation over time. In particular, there is insufficient research examining how participation is navigated across life stages, and how relational responsibilities and capacity influence whether women are able to engage in ways that lead to visibility, leadership, or influence.

There remains a gap in understanding:

- how wāhine Māori experience and prioritise participation within existing networks
- how life stage and relational responsibilities influence engagement
- how participation within these spaces translates into visibility, leadership, and influence

While numerous networking opportunities exist across the sector, existing research does not fully explore how these opportunities align with the lived realities of wāhine, or whether participation leads to meaningful recognition or decision-making power. This research addresses this gap by examining participation as a relational and dynamic process, shaped not only by access, but by capacity, timing, and life stage, and by exploring how participation connects to influence in practice.

## 4.0 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore how women in Aotearoa's Agri sector experience participation within networks, and how these experiences are understood in relation to resilience. Undertaken as part of the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme, the study aims to generate practical insight grounded in lived experience. It draws on participant kōrero alongside relevant literature to examine how participation and networks are experienced within context.

This approach recognises that knowledge is relational, shaped through experience, connection, and shared understanding (Durie, 2001; Smith, 2012).

### 4.2 Participant Selection

Participants were purposively selected to reflect a diverse range of roles, backgrounds, and life stages across the Agri sector. Three participant groups were identified:

- Governance and leadership roles (e.g. trustees, directors, consultants)
- Formal networks and organisations (e.g. Dairy Women's Network, leadership programmes)
- Farmers, managers, and agricultural workers

In total, 16 participants were involved in the study, including 5 participants in governance roles, 6 from formal networks, and 5 from on-farm and operational roles. Participants were engaged through existing professional and sector networks to ensure diversity of experience.

### 4.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences in an open and flexible way. Interviews ranged from approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were conducted in person, online, or by phone, depending on participant preference.

With participant consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. Notes were also taken during interviews to capture key points and contextual observations.

### 4.4 Interview Design

A semi-structured interview approach was used to ensure consistency while allowing participants to expand on areas of importance. The interview design was guided by 12 core questions across five key areas:

- experiences with networks
- benefits and purpose of participation
- barriers and enablers
- meaning of resilience
- aspirations for wāhine in the Agri sector

Interviews were conversational in nature, with insights drawn from participant responses as they emerged rather than from fixed prompts. Additional probing questions were used where needed to clarify or expand on key ideas and experiences. Māori-specific perspectives were explored where relevant, enabling consideration of how whakapapa, whānau, and te ao Māori values shape participation and resilience.

The full Participant Questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were reviewed and coded to identify recurring ideas and patterns across participant responses. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflect shared experiences across the dataset.

The analysis process was iterative, involving ongoing refinement to ensure themes were grounded in the data and accurately reflected participant kōrero. A summary of the thematic analysis is provided in Appendix C.

#### 4.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in this research was voluntary. Participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet outlining the purpose of the study and gave informed consent prior to participation. Participants were able to choose whether they remained anonymous, partially identified, or attributed.

All data were securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this research.

## 5.0 Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from semi-structured interviews with 16 women across Aotearoa's Agri sector, including participants from governance, formal networks, and on-farm roles. The findings draw directly on participant kōrero, reflecting diverse experiences across roles, life stages, and contexts within the sector.

Using an inductive thematic analysis approach, patterns were identified across the data to understand how women experience participation within networks and how these experiences shape resilience, leadership, visibility, and support. Themes presented in this chapter were developed through an iterative coding process, as outlined in the Methodology and (Appendix C).

Participant interviews were guided by a semi-structured question set (Appendix B), which explored experiences of participation, networks, barriers, resilience, and leadership across the Agri sector. While individual experiences varied, consistent patterns emerged across participants, particularly in relation to the role of networks and relationships. The findings highlight that participation is not experienced as a simple or linear process, but is shaped by relational systems, everyday realities, and structural conditions within the sector.

Across all findings, a key thread emerges: while networks provide connection, support, and opportunity, participation within these spaces does not necessarily translate into visibility, recognition, or influence. This distinction is central to understanding how women experience and navigate the Agri sector.

The findings are presented across three interconnected themes: relational systems enable and sustain participation; participation does not ensure visibility, recognition, or influence; and barriers shape access to and experience of participation. These themes are presented separately for clarity but remain interconnected, reflecting the complexity of participation within Agri sector networks.

### 5.2 Relational Systems Enable Participation

Most participants described participation as enabled and sustained through relationships, rather than through access to networks alone. Engagement within the Agri sector was consistently shaped by connection to others, including whānau, partners, and wider community networks, which provided both practical and emotional support. Participation was not experienced as an individual activity, but as something embedded within relational systems that made engagement possible.

This suggests that participation is dependent on relational conditions rather than individual choice alone. Where these conditions are present, engagement is enabled; where they are absent, participation becomes significantly constrained.

All participants described support in both practical and relational forms. This included shared responsibilities, encouragement, and the presence of people who made space for their involvement. "You can't do these things by yourself — you need support at home."

It strongly highlights that participation is not simply a matter of willingness, but is made possible through the presence of support systems that enable engagement. Without this support, participation was often described as difficult to sustain. This reinforces that participation is not equally accessible, but contingent on the relationships and structures surrounding the individual.

Networks themselves were experienced as relational environments where connection, shared understanding, and ongoing interaction played a central role.

*"Socially is the big one... just being in a group of women is different."*

Many participants described learning through conversation, observation, and working alongside others, rather than through formal or structured processes. Engagement within these environments allowed individuals to connect with others who understood the realities of the sector, creating a sense of shared understanding and belonging.

This further demonstrates that connection within networks is not only social but functional, shaping both how individuals access opportunities and how they sustain their involvement over time. The importance of these connections was most evident during times of challenge.

*"You need those networks when things aren't so good. It's no good in isolation."*

Such environments provided encouragement and reassurance, enabling individuals to remain engaged even when facing pressure or uncertainty. Without these connections, participants described a heightened sense of isolation. Indicating that networks play a critical role not only in enabling participation, but in preventing disengagement during periods of pressure or uncertainty.

Many participants also emphasised that networks are not simply sites for information exchange, but spaces where relational dynamics underpin participation. Engagement involves both giving and receiving support, reinforcing a sense of shared responsibility.

*"Networking should be positive and uplifting of everybody."*

*"You're just there to support each other and uplift each other."*

Many participants described the impact of networks as extending beyond the individual. Knowledge, experience, and support were shared across relationships, creating a ripple effect that strengthened others within the network.

*"It hasn't just benefited me — it's benefited my network... the people I work with."*

This suggests that participation contributes to collective outcomes, where individuals both draw from and contribute to the strength of the network. Participation is therefore not only individually beneficial, but collectively reinforcing. Community-based networks were described as relational, informal, and grounded in shared experience. These networks were built through connection, familiarity, and ongoing interaction, creating environments where individuals felt comfortable engaging and able to relate to others with similar experiences.

*"It's more about having someone that's going to coordinate everybody... so you've got some friends."*

*"If you don't have that... how good are you going to be for your family, your work, your community?"*

Proves the importance of relatability and shared experience in shaping participation, where belonging creates the conditions that enable sustained engagement.

Resilience emerged as an ongoing and collective process shaped through participation and connection, rather than as a fixed or individual trait. Most participants described resilience as closely connected to relationships and shared responsibility, where strength was built through support systems and ongoing interaction with others.

*"You can't do things on your own... you need support and backing."*

*"The networks I've provided... allow them to bounce back."*

Resilience was also linked to the ability to support others and build capability within networks:

*"If I'm doing my job right, I've built them to be self-sufficient."*

These accounts reflect a relational understanding of resilience, where strength extends outward through networks rather than being contained within the individual. Over time, participation builds knowledge, confidence, and capability, strengthening the ability to respond to future challenges. This suggests that resilience cannot be understood as an individual capacity alone, but must be examined in relation to the networks and relationships that support it.

Resilience was therefore not experienced in isolation, but as something embedded within relationships and sustained through trust, reciprocity, and shared experience. At the same time, participants' experiences highlighted that where these relational systems were not supported by wider structures, participation could become more difficult to sustain. Participants described system-based structures as more formal, structured, and less responsive to lived experience, often requiring individuals to adapt to the system rather than the system adapting to them.

*"Spaces are growing... but not enough."*

*"We're already on a back foot... not on the same playing field."*

Where systems lacked flexibility or failed to recognise relational dynamics, participation could feel less accessible, limiting the ability of individuals to engage fully within networks.

This reveals a misalignment between formal structures and the relational conditions that enable participation, where systems designed to support engagement do not always align with how participation is experienced in practice.

A majority of participants emphasised that participation is influenced not only by access to networks, but by how those networks are structured and experienced, reinforcing that relational systems must be supported by flexible and responsive environments. Where networks are relational, participation is more easily sustained; where they are rigid or misaligned, engagement may be limited.

#### **Key finding:**

Participation is enabled and sustained through relational systems, including whānau, community, and network connections, which provide the support, flexibility, and shared experience necessary for ongoing engagement, and through which resilience is developed and sustained over time.

### **5.3 Networks as Pathways to Capability and Leadership**

Across interviews, networks were consistently described as key pathways through which capability and leadership develop within the Agri sector. This contrasts with social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), which positions networks as neutral resources. Instead, the findings show that networks are shaped by relationships and visibility, and do not operate equally for all participants.

*"Winning Sharemilker of the Year — that was my launching pad."*

Participation was not seen as optional, but as central to accessing opportunity, building relationships, and progressing within the sector.

Engagement within networks increases visibility, which in turn influences access to opportunities that are otherwise difficult to obtain:

*"There's so much networking that happens in that space. And if you're not there, you just don't — you're not part of it, you don't have those opportunities."*

In this sense, networks operate as relational environments where opportunity is strongly tied to presence rather than capability alone. Being visible allows individuals to be recognised, considered, and included within these spaces. Without it, participants described feeling excluded, with limited awareness of available opportunities.

Presence itself was seen as influential:

*"Just be there, just be amongst it... get the benefits of it."*

*"You've got to be in those spaces — that's where things happen."*

Learning within networks is often informal, occurring through observation, interaction, and ongoing engagement. Over time, this exposure contributes to the development of knowledge, confidence, and relationships. Growth was also described as extending beyond technical capability:

*"Those networks help support your growth... not just your business, but you as a person."*

Development includes increased confidence, perspective, and the ability to navigate the sector more effectively. Exposure to different experiences shapes how individuals position themselves within the Agri sector. Networks further expand relational connections:

*"You don't know who you don't know... my role is to expose them to as much as I can."*

Participation therefore benefits both individuals and others, as connections and opportunities are shared across networks. Capability development was described as cumulative. Over time, engagement builds knowledge, confidence, and relationships that support leadership pathways. Leadership emerges gradually rather than through a single event or position.

Access to these benefits is not evenly distributed. Where visibility and connection are required, those outside networks may face limited opportunities regardless of their capability. Networks therefore shape both access and progression within the sector.

Key finding: Networks act as pathways to capability and leadership, enabled through visibility, participation, and access to relationships.

#### 5.4 Gendered Pathways and Invisible Labour

Some participants described how gendered expectations shape the roles women occupy within networks and the Agri sector more broadly. These expectations influence both how women participate and how their contributions are recognised within those spaces. A consistent pattern identified by participants was the positioning of women within organisational and support roles:

*"Women are the coordinators... they're organising it, but they're not necessarily the ones leading it."*



This highlights that women are heavily involved in the functioning of networks, often taking on roles that enable events, activities, and connections to occur. These roles are essential to the operation of networks but are not always associated with formal leadership or recognition.

Most participants also described a clear distinction between contribution and visibility:

*"All the people registering others... were women. Then who sits up the front? The men."*

Leadership is often associated with visible positions, such as speaking roles or formal representation, while the work that supports these roles remains less visible. Within networks, therefore not determined solely by contribution, but by how roles are defined and recognised. Where leadership is associated with visibility and authority, the relational and organisational contributions made by women may not be acknowledged as leadership, despite their importance. A majority of the participants identified this as an area requiring change:

*"We need to change that narrative... women need to be the ones leading it."*

An awareness of the imbalance between contribution and recognition is evident, alongside a desire to shift how leadership is understood and enacted within the sector. Alongside external expectations, participants also described internal factors that influence participation:

*"A lot of women don't feel like they have enough to contribute."*

Broader structural and cultural dynamics shape self-perception. Where leadership and contribution are framed in narrow ways, individuals may question their legitimacy or value within networks. This supports the concept of invisible labour (Daniels, 1987), while demonstrating how these dynamics shape visibility and leadership pathways within networks.

Gendered pathways are reinforced not only through external structures, but also through internalised perceptions of role and contribution. Participation is therefore shaped by both how opportunities are presented and how individuals position themselves within those opportunities. Women's contributions are often normalised and expected, rather than highlighted and recognised. Coordination, organisation, and relational support are treated as implicit responsibilities rather than as leadership activities. These patterns reinforce invisible labour, where essential work is undertaken without formal acknowledgment. Over time, this influences access to leadership pathways, as recognition and visibility play a significant role in progression within networks.

Importantly, these findings do not suggest that women are absent from leadership. Instead, they highlight that leadership is occurring in forms that are not always formally recognised or valued. This challenges traditional definitions of leadership and suggests the need to broaden how leadership is understood within the Agri sector.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that gendered expectations shape both participation and recognition within networks. While women are actively contributing, their roles are often positioned in ways that limit visibility and access to formal leadership pathways.

This highlights how participation, recognition, and leadership opportunities are shaped by gendered structures within networks.

Key finding: Women's participation is shaped by gendered expectations, with significant contributions remaining unrecognised and leadership opportunities limited.

### 5.5 Barriers Shape Participation

Participants described participation as shaped by a range of interconnected barriers, including structural, relational, and internal factors. These were not experienced in isolation, but as overlapping conditions that influence access to and engagement within networks. Time and competing responsibilities were consistently identified as significant barriers.

*"Time, responsibility... a lot of women don't feel like they have enough to contribute."*

Caregiving responsibilities were also frequently identified.

*"Having kids... they can't always be in certain environments."*

Participation was therefore described as something that must be negotiated alongside work, whānau, and community responsibilities. Many participants also described broader structural and cultural expectations.

*"The norm is that women stay at home and hold the house down."*

Internal factors such as confidence and perceived legitimacy also influenced engagement.

*"We're already on a back foot... not on the same playing field."*

*Participants highlighted that access to opportunities is often shaped by relationships.*

*"It's who you know, not what you know."*

Together, these barriers were described as cumulative, shaping how participation is experienced and whether engagement is sustained over time.

Key finding: Participation is shaped by multi-layered barriers, including structural, relational, and internal factors, which influence both access to networks and the ability to engage within them.

### 5.6 Future Aspirations and Participation

Participants expressed clear aspirations for increased participation, representation, and access within the Agri sector. These aspirations were grounded in their experiences of navigating networks, reflecting both the opportunities they have accessed and the barriers they have encountered.

A key theme identified was the importance of representation, particularly for Māori and wāhine.

Most participants highlighted the need for greater visibility of individuals who reflect their own backgrounds and experiences.

*"To have more women consultants, Māori women consultants... people that look and sound like us."*

This highlights that representation is not only about numbers, but about relatability and connection. Seeing others who share similar experiences can influence how individuals perceive their own place within networks and the sector more broadly.

While this aligns with frameworks such as SDG5, the findings demonstrate that representation alone is not sufficient without addressing access and participation conditions. Most participants also linked representation to understanding and connection:

*"When you've got people who understand our upbringing, then they can be on the same level as us."*

This suggests that shared experiences can influence communication, trust, and engagement within networks. Where there is alignment in experience and understanding, participation may be more accessible and meaningful. Participants emphasised the importance of developing capability within their own communities:

*"We have to start to develop our own resources in that space."*

This indicates a desire to move beyond reliance on existing structures toward building capacity internally. By developing their own resources and pathways, participants can create opportunities that are more aligned with their needs and experiences. There was also a strong emphasis on supporting others to engage:

*"Get them to a certain point where they can actually go and teach other people."*

*"That's where the groups can provide support."*

This reflects a focus on collective development, where participation is not limited to individual progression but extends to enabling others. Building capability within networks creates a cycle where knowledge and experience are shared, strengthening participation over time. A majority of the participants also identified awareness as a key factor influencing future participation:

*"I don't think there's enough awareness... it's who you know, not what you know."*

This highlights that opportunities are not always visible or accessible. Where participation depends on existing connections, individuals who are outside those networks may struggle to engage. Increasing awareness is therefore critical to expanding participation. In addition, participants emphasised the need for more flexible and accessible opportunities:

*"Providing opportunities which are ongoing... if you miss gate one, you can't jump on at gate two."*

Further demonstrates that current structures can limit participation by offering fixed entry points. Where opportunities are not continuous or flexible, individuals who are unable to engage at specific times may be excluded. Demonstrating the importance of designing pathways that allow for ongoing engagement, rather than one-time access. Flexible structures enable individuals to participate at different stages of their journey, supporting sustained involvement over time. These aspirations collectively reflect a desire for change in how networks operate. Participants are seeking environments that are more inclusive, visible, and responsive to their realities. This includes increased representation, improved access to opportunities, and structures that support ongoing engagement rather than limiting participation.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that future participation is shaped by both current experiences and expectations for change. Participants are not only reflecting on their own engagement, but also considering how networks can be strengthened to support others. These aspirations reflect a broader desire not only for increased participation, but for sustained visibility, recognition, and influence within the Agri sector.

*"It's much better now than it used to be."*

Key finding: Future participation is shaped by representation, visibility, and access, with a strong emphasis on enabling Māori and women to engage, lead, and sustain involvement in the Agri sector.

## 6.0 Discussion

This chapter brings together participant experiences and existing literature to explore how networks shape women's participation in Aotearoa's Agri sector. While industry and research often position networks as neutral spaces that build capability and opportunity, the findings suggest something more complex. Networks actively shape how women participate, how they are seen, and whether their voices are recognised.

Across the findings, a consistent distinction emerges between participation and influence. While women are present within networks, this presence does not necessarily translate into visibility, recognition, or the ability to shape outcomes. From a Māori perspective, being present does not automatically equate to being acknowledged (Mead, 2003). This reflects broader structural dynamics, where power influences whose contributions are recognised and sustained (Pomeroy, 2021; Ngā Uri o te Ngāhere Trust, 2023).

What becomes clear is this:

Participation alone is not enough.

*"It's the camaraderie that keeps you going."*

### 6.1 Networks as Pathways to Capability and Leadership

This chapter brings together what participants shared and what the literature suggests to explore how networks shape women's experiences in the Agri sector. What becomes apparent is that networks are not neutral spaces. They shape how women participate, how they are seen, and whether their voices are heard, in ways that are not fully explained by access alone. This reflects wider rural and sector dynamics where power and influence shape whose contributions are recognised (Pomeroy, 2021) and are embedded within broader structural systems (Ngā Uri o te Ngāhere Trust, 2023).

Industry narratives often position networks as spaces that build capability, confidence, and opportunity for women. Participant experiences supported this in part, describing networks as places where they learned, built relationships, and developed over time. Learning occurred through conversation, shared experience, and continued involvement, rather than through structured or formal pathways. This aligns with research that recognises networks as spaces for knowledge sharing and capability development (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Parsons et al., 2026), and with Māori perspectives where capability develops through connection and engagement over time (Durie, 2001; Black, 2000).

However, most of the participant experiences also reveal a key limitation. While networks support capability and development, this does not necessarily translate into recognition or influence. Visibility within networks shapes who is noticed and given opportunities, meaning that capability alone is not sufficient. Participation creates pathways, but those pathways are not equally realised.

Within a Māori context, being present does not necessarily mean being acknowledged (Mead, 2003). This reinforces a critical distinction: while networks create opportunities for engagement, participation alone does not ensure that individuals are recognised or able to influence outcomes.

*"It hasn't just benefited me — it's benefited my network... the people I work with."*

### 6.2 Networks as Social, Cultural, Emotional

As the findings were explored, networks emerged as more than spaces of professional opportunity. Many of the participants described them as sources of social, cultural, and emotional support, where connection and shared experience sustained engagement over time. This reflects research highlighting the role of networks in reducing isolation and supporting wellbeing in rural contexts (Alston & Kent, 2008; Parsons et al., 2026).

However, the participant experiences suggest that support is not simply an added benefit — it is central to participation itself. Engagement was sustained through relationships, rather than individual capability or access alone. From a Māori perspective, this aligns with whakawhanaungatanga, where relationships underpin both wellbeing and participation (Durie, 2001).

These relational dynamics also connect directly to resilience. While resilience is often framed individually, participants described it as something sustained through connection, shared experience, and support. Networks provided the conditions that allowed participation to continue, particularly during periods of challenge.

This highlights an important shift. Participation is not only enabled by access to networks, but by the presence of relational support within them. Without these conditions, engagement becomes difficult to sustain.

At the same time, these findings reinforce a broader distinction across the research. While networks provide support that enables participation, this does not necessarily translate into visibility or influence. Support sustains engagement, but does not guarantee recognition within the network or beyond it.

### 6.3 Barriers to Participation

Barriers to participation are often described as practical issues, such as time, work, and family responsibilities (Alston, 2012; Shortall, 2020; Little, 1997). This reflects what some participants shared, where these responsibilities shaped when and how they could take part.

However, some participant experiences suggest that these barriers do not simply prevent participation — they reshape it. Women described fitting participation around competing demands, negotiating engagement in ways that aligned with their responsibilities. Participation was therefore not absent, but conditional.

This reflects broader rural dynamics where participation is shaped by social expectations and structural conditions that influence whose involvement is visible and sustained (Pomeroy, 2021). Participation does not occur under equal conditions.

From a Māori perspective, participation is embedded within responsibilities to whānau and community, rather than existing separately from them (Durie, 2001; Smith, 2012). These responsibilities are not barriers in isolation, but part of the context within which participation is negotiated.

Participants also identified internal factors such as confidence and perceived legitimacy, alongside access to opportunities that are often informal and relationship-based. This reinforces that participation is shaped by the interaction between structural, relational, and internal conditions.

These findings suggest that participation is not simply restricted, but actively negotiated. However, the ability to navigate these conditions influences who remains visible and engaged over time.

### 6.4 Resilience as Collective Capability

Some participants did not describe resilience as something held individually. Instead, it's developed through relationships and continued participation in networks.

This contrasts with common approaches in agricultural research, where resilience is framed as the ability of individuals or farm systems to adapt and cope with change (Alston, 2012; Darnhofer, 2014). These perspectives position resilience as something located within the individual or enterprise.

But if resilience is individual, why did participants place such strong emphasis on others?

Participant experiences showed that resilience was built through connection, shared experience, and support. Rather than coping alone, they drew on networks to manage challenges and sustain engagement. This aligns with research linking women's resilience in agricultural contexts to their

engagement in social networks, where relationships provide both practical support and adaptive capacity (Parsons et al., 2026).

This also reflects rural research that connects resilience to social support and community (Alston & Kent, 2008; Pini, 2003), but extends it further. In this research, support was not simply beneficial — it was essential.

So what does this mean for how resilience is understood?

It suggests that resilience is not something people have, but something developed through participation. It grows over time through continued connection, confidence, and experience within networks.

This links directly to the research question. If participation shapes women's experiences in networks, then it also shapes how they navigate challenge. Resilience, therefore, is not evenly experienced. It depends on access to networks and the ability to remain connected within them. Strengthening resilience is not just about individuals adapting. It is about strengthening the relationships and conditions that allow participation to continue.

### 6.5 Gendered Pathways and Invisible Labour

Most of the participants consistently described being heavily involved in organising, supporting, and sustaining networks. However, these contributions were not always recognised as leadership. This aligns with research that highlights the underrepresentation of women in visible leadership roles (Shortall, 2020), and the importance of often unseen or “invisible” labour in maintaining systems (Daniels, 1987).

This is reinforced by research on rural women in Aotearoa, which shows that women's significant contributions across farm, family, and community contexts are often undervalued or remain invisible within formal structures (Pitt, 1998).

But if women are already doing this work, why is it not recognised as leadership?

Traditional leadership models tend to focus on formal roles, authority, and visibility. From this perspective, leadership is something that is held, rather than something that is done.

Participant experiences suggest something different. Leadership was occurring through support, coordination, and enabling others — work that is essential to how networks function, but not always named as leadership. This reflects broader thinking that leadership can be relational and based on contribution rather than position (Durie, 2001).

However, these forms of leadership are often less visible within dominant frameworks. Pomeroy (2021) highlights that decision-making and influence are shaped by dominant power structures, which determine whose contributions are seen as legitimate.

So what does this mean for women participating in these networks?

It suggests that the issue is not a lack of participation, but how leadership is defined and recognised. If participation shapes women's experiences in networks, it also shapes how their leadership is seen — or not seen. Strengthening participation, therefore, requires expanding what counts as leadership, so that existing contributions are recognised and valued.

### 6.6 Community-Based versus System-Based Approaches

Looking more closely at how networks operate, participants described a clear difference between community-based and system-based approaches. Community-based networks were experienced as relational and flexible, grounded in shared experience. This aligns with work that emphasises connection and collective engagement (Smith, 2012), and research showing that women often

engage more effectively in informal, relationship-based networks that support connection and participation (Parsons et al., 2026).

However, system-based structures were described differently. They tended to rely on formal processes, structure, and standardisation.

If participation is intended to be inclusive, why do these systems feel less responsive?

Some participants' experiences suggest that these structures place the responsibility on individuals to adapt, rather than adapting to those engaging within them. This contrasts with more relational forms of participation, where engagement is shaped through connection.

These differences reflect deeper structural patterns, where systems shaped through Western governance approaches are less responsive to relational ways of engaging, particularly for Māori (Ngā Uri o te Ngāhere Trust, 2023). Participation, therefore, occurs within systems that do not always align with how people naturally engage. Participation is strengthened where approaches align with lived realities, rather than requiring people to fit into fixed structures (Durie, 2001).

So what does this mean for participation in practice?

It suggests that access alone is not enough. Participation is shaped by how networks are designed and experienced. If participation shapes women's experiences in networks, then the design of those networks also shapes who is able to engage within them.

Supporting participation, therefore, is not just about creating opportunities, but about how those opportunities are structured and experienced.

#### 6.7 Future Participation and Aspirations

Most participants did not describe a lack of interest in leadership. Instead, they spoke about wanting to take on greater roles as their circumstances allow. This aligns with work that highlights the importance of supporting wāhine into leadership pathways (Temara, 2021), and the ongoing commitment of wāhine to contribute within their communities and the sector (Reti, 2021).

But if the commitment is there, what is holding participation back?

Some participant experiences suggest the issue is not motivation. Involvement was often delayed by competing responsibilities, including whānau, farm, and work commitments. These demands shaped when participation was possible, rather than whether it was desired.

This reflects a different pattern to traditional leadership models, which tend to assume steady progression over time. Instead, wāhine described moving in and out of roles across different life stages. Early on, particularly when caring for young families, involvement was limited. As these responsibilities changed, greater participation became possible.

So is leadership something people move into, or something they move in and out of?

A number of participants also showed a clear preference for spaces grounded in connection and shared experience. This aligns with relational understandings of leadership, where contribution to others is central (Pere, 1991; Durie, 2001). Learning and leadership develop through engagement over time, rather than through position alone (Black, 2000).

However, a gap remains between aspiration and opportunity. While leadership pathways exist, they are not always structured in ways that reflect these lived realities. Institutional systems influence how roles are accessed and recognised (Reti, 2021), and these findings suggest that timing and flexibility are critical.

This raises another question — is the issue a lack of opportunity, or a mismatch in timing?



The findings suggest the challenge lies in how pathways are designed. When opportunities are fixed or linear, they do not align with the way wāhine are able to participate. This links directly to the research question. If participation shapes women's experiences in networks, then the timing and structure of leadership pathways shape whether they are able to step forward within them.

Participation, therefore, is not only about access. It is about readiness, timing, and the ability to engage when circumstances allow. Strengthening participation requires more than increasing opportunities. It requires designing pathways that reflect lived realities and support movement in and out of leadership over time.

### 6.8 Implications

The findings of this research highlight a deeper challenge beyond access to networks and leadership pathways, particularly for wāhine Māori. While participation across the Agri sector is increasing, this does not consistently translate into recognition, visibility, or influence. This reflects broader rural dynamics where power structures shape whose contributions are recognised and able to influence outcomes (Pomeroy, 2021).

Māori leadership perspectives frame participation differently. Participation is not simply about occupying roles, but about contributing in ways that uphold responsibility to whānau, hapū, and whenua (Durie, 2001; Smith, 2012; Pere, 1991; Mead, 2003).

Within this understanding, leadership is expressed through connection, service, and accountability, rather than individual advancement alone. This is reinforced by Black (2000, 2014), who emphasises that mātauranga Māori is grounded in lived experience and relationships. Leadership and participation are inseparable from identity, where contribution is shaped through connection and collective responsibility. Participant experiences reflect this, describing involvement that was relational and grounded, rather than driven by formal roles.

But if participation is occurring in these ways, why is it not consistently recognised?

These forms of leadership were not always visible within structured sector environments. This reflects Teira's (2021) argument that presence within systems does not guarantee that Māori voices are heard. Participants described being included, yet not always able to influence decisions or outcomes. This highlights a clear distinction between participation and voice.

In contrast, Māori-led and community-based environments were described as spaces where contribution was acknowledged and visible. These spaces were grounded in trust, shared understanding, and relationships, enabling wāhine to engage in ways that reflected their identity and strengths (Pere, 1991; Durie, 2001).

However, this was not consistently the case within formal sector pathways. Reti (2021) identifies that agribusiness and governance systems shape how participation is recognised, often prioritising visibility, role, and measurable output. This does not always align with relational expressions of leadership (Mead, 2003; Smith, 2012). This difference is also reflected in Indigenous perspectives articulated by Kruger (n.d.), where authority is grounded in responsibility and connection, rather than position or control.

So what determines whether participation leads to influence?

Iti (2023) reinforces that engagement within imposed systems does not necessarily equate to authority. Presence alone does not guarantee the ability to shape decisions, highlighting the gap between inclusion and influence.

This links directly to the research question. If participation shapes women's experiences in networks, it also shapes whether their voices are recognised and able to influence outcomes.



What emerges is that participation for wāhine Māori is shaped by the interaction between relational values and structured systems. While wāhine bring strong leadership grounded in identity, connection, and responsibility, these strengths are not always recognised within dominant frameworks.

Strengthening participation therefore requires more than increasing access. It requires recognising different expressions of leadership, creating environments where contribution is visible, and ensuring that pathways enable influence as well as inclusion.

#### 6.9 Conclusion of Discussion

Across this discussion, a consistent pattern emerges. Engagement within Agri sector networks is not shaped by access alone, but by how relationships, systems, and circumstances interact. This reflects broader structural and power dynamics within the sector that influence how participation is recognised and whose voices are able to shape outcomes.

While existing research and industry narratives position networks as pathways to opportunity, these findings show that opportunity does not always translate into influence. Being involved does not guarantee that contributions are recognised or able to shape outcomes.

This raises a broader question — what actually enables meaningful involvement?

The findings suggest that influence depends on more than presence. It is shaped by recognition, timing, relationships, and how networks and pathways are structured. Leadership is already occurring, but not always in ways that are visible or valued within dominant systems.

This creates a gap between involvement and impact.

Addressing this gap requires more than increasing opportunities. It requires rethinking how participation, leadership, and contribution are recognised, and ensuring that pathways reflect the realities of those engaging within the sector.

Ultimately, strengthening participation means creating conditions where wāhine are not only involved, but able to influence the spaces they are part of.

## 7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter brings the research to a close by drawing together the key insights generated throughout the study. It reflects on how participation in networks shapes women's experiences within the Agri sector and what this means for resilience, leadership, and influence.

This research set out to explore how Agri sector networks contribute to the development and sustainment of resilience for women in Aotearoa. Through qualitative inquiry grounded in kaupapa Māori principles, the findings demonstrate that participation is not simply a matter of access, but is shaped by relational, structural, and contextual conditions.

A key contribution of this research is the identification of a critical gap:

*Participation within networks does not necessarily lead to visibility, recognition, or influence.*

While wāhine are actively engaged, their ability to shape outcomes depends on how their contributions are recognised, the strength of relationships, timing, and the design of systems within which they participate.

This chapter synthesises these insights, addresses the research question, outlines implications for the Agri sector, and presents recommendations grounded directly in the findings.

### 7.2 Summary of Key Findings

This research demonstrates that participation within Agri sector networks is relational, negotiated, and unevenly experienced. Rather than being a simple matter of access, participation is shaped by the interaction of relationships, responsibilities, visibility, and structural conditions.

Networks function as important pathways to capability and leadership, enabling access to knowledge, relationships, and opportunities. However, these pathways are not equally accessible, as participation is influenced by connection, awareness, and positioning within networks.

At the same time, networks provide essential social, cultural, and emotional support. This support sustains participation over time and reinforces that engagement is not solely driven by opportunity, but by connection and shared experience.

Participation is also shaped by multiple, overlapping barriers, including time constraints, caregiving responsibilities, structural expectations, and confidence. These factors do not prevent participation entirely, but shape how, when, and to what extent it occurs.

Resilience emerges through this process as a relational and collective capability, developed through ongoing engagement within networks rather than as an individual trait.

However, across all findings, a consistent theme emerges:

*Participation does not guarantee recognition or influence.*

Women contribute significantly within networks, particularly through relational and organisational roles, yet these contributions are not always recognised as leadership. This creates a gap between participation and visibility, shaping access to influence and decision-making. Taken together, the findings highlight that while networks are central to participation and resilience, they also reproduce inequalities in recognition, visibility, and influence.

### 7.3 Addressing the Research Question

This research asked:

*How do Agri sector networks contribute to the development and sustainment of resilience for women in Aotearoa's Agri sector?*

The findings show that networks contribute to resilience in three interconnected ways:

- Relational support: Networks provide connection, shared experience, and reassurance that sustain engagement over time.
- Knowledge exchange: Learning occurs through experience, observation, and interaction, strengthening capability and confidence.
- Sustained participation: Ongoing engagement maintains connection to the sector, supporting both individual and collective resilience.

However, a critical limitation remains. While networks support resilience, participation within these networks does not necessarily translate into influence or voice. Resilience is therefore shaped not only by participation, but by whether that participation is recognised and able to shape outcomes.

### 7.4 Implications for the Agri Sector

These findings suggest that current approaches, which focus primarily on increasing participation, are insufficient on their own. A shift is required — from viewing participation as access to understanding participation as experience and influence.

Networks must be understood not as neutral structures, but as environments that shape:

- who participates
- how participation occurs
- and whose contributions are recognised

The research highlights three key implications:

1. Participation must be supported relationally, not just structurally  
Informal and relationship-based networks play a critical role in sustaining engagement and should be recognised alongside formal systems.
2. Structural barriers must be actively addressed  
Without considering time, caregiving, and access, efforts to increase participation may reinforce existing inequities.
3. Recognition must be central to participation strategies  
Participation alone is insufficient if it does not lead to visibility, influence, or voice.

For wāhine Māori, this is particularly significant. Leadership is expressed through relationships, identity, and responsibility (Durie, 2001; Mead, 2003), yet these contributions are not always visible within dominant sector systems. Strengthening participation therefore requires recognising diverse expressions of leadership and ensuring that contribution leads to influence.

## 7.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Develop inclusive and accessible network pathways

Findings show that access to networks is often informal and dependent on existing relationships.

\* Agri-sector organisations and network providers (e.g. industry groups, collectives, and regional hubs) should develop visible and transparent entry pathways, including targeted outreach and regional network hubs.

**\* This should be designed and piloted within 12 months, with ongoing evaluation and refinement.**

### 2. Address structural barriers to participation

Findings highlight time, caregiving, and competing responsibilities as key constraints.

\* Industry bodies, programme designers, and employers should implement flexible participation models, including childcare-inclusive programmes and remote/online engagement options.

**\* These adaptations should be introduced within 6–12 months, with uptake reviewed annually.**

### 3. Create flexible and continuous participation pathways

Findings show participation occurs across life stages rather than in linear progression.

\* Network coordinators and sector programme leads should design systems that allow wāhine to move in and out of networks without penalty, including re-entry points and ongoing engagement options.

**\* These pathways should be developed within 12 months and embedded as standard practice.**

### 4. Recognise and value relational and informal leadership

Findings show women contribute significantly through coordination and relational roles that are not recognised.

\* Governance boards, leadership teams, and industry organisations should expand leadership definitions and formally recognise relational contributions within performance, reporting, and leadership frameworks.

**\* This review should begin within 6 months, with changes implemented within 12–18 months.**

### 5. Embed kaupapa Māori perspectives within network design

Findings show participation is relational and grounded in identity and responsibility.

\* Māori leaders, alongside agri-sector organisations and network designers, should co-design network approaches that incorporate mātauranga Māori, relational models, and Māori-led frameworks.

**\* Co-design processes should begin within 6 months, with implementation over 1–2 years.**

### 6. Strengthen environments that sustain wāhine voice and influence

Findings show participation does not always lead to influence.

\* Sector leaders, governance boards, and funders should implement structured mentorship, sponsorship programmes, and representation targets to ensure wāhine voices are reflected in decision-making spaces.

**\* These initiatives should be established within 12 months, with measurable outcomes tracked over 2–3 years.**

## 7.6 Final Reflection

This research did not begin as a report.

It began with people.

With wāhine who opened their homes, their time, and their whakaaro — who shared honestly and without hesitation.

Their kōrero was not just about participation in the Agri sector.

It was about responsibility — to whānau, to whenua, and to each other.

What became clear early on was that these women are not simply part of the sector — they are carrying it.

They are holding together multiple roles, often unseen.

They are navigating systems that were not designed with them in mind.

They are showing up — for their whānau, their communities, their whenua, and their work — all at once.

And they do so without always being recognised for it.

There is a quiet strength in that.

Their stories reminded me of Dame Whina Cooper.

Not in comparison, but in wairua.

The same determination.

The same commitment to people and place.

The same willingness to keep moving forward, even when the path is not clear.

Like Dame Whina, these wāhine do not wait to be acknowledged —

they act,

they carry,

and they continue.

This journey is also personal.

I carry the whakapapa of K. Teira,

and with that comes a responsibility to ensure that Māori voice is not lost.

Teira's work reminds us that participation alone does not guarantee that voice is recognised or sustained within systems —

it must be actively retained and protected (Teira, 2021).

That whakaaro stayed with me throughout this research.

Because the question is not only whether wāhine are present.

It is whether they are heard.

I kept coming back to the words — \*Kei hea taku reo?\*

Through the waiata of Whirimako Black, this becomes more than a question of language.

It is a question of identity, belonging, and whether there is space to stand

and be recognised.

The wāhine in this research are not always asking this aloud —

but they are living within it.

They are present.

They are contributing.

But they are not always seen or heard in the ways that matter.

And that is where the real risk sits.

Not just in participation — but in the quiet loss of voice, and with it, the loss of knowledge, perspective, and experience.

As Black (2000; 2014) reminds us, knowledge is not separate from people. It is lived, relational, and carried across generations through kōrero, waiata, and connection. The voices shared in this research are not just individual stories — they are expressions of identity, whakapapa, and continuity.

They are not just data. They are taonga.  
Across every kōrero, there was something consistent.  
These women are genuine.  
They show up for each other.  
They support each other.  
They carry each other when needed.

No matter their background or role, there is a shared commitment to people and to the future of the Agri sector. Their contribution is significant — not just operationally, but relationally and in leadership — even when it is not formally recognised.

Their resilience is not theoretical.

It is lived daily —  
in long hours,  
in hard decisions,  
in the responsibilities they carry across multiple spaces.  
And still, they continue.

That is te mana o te wāhine.

It is not limited to one identity or one group — it is seen across all wāhine in strength, care, leadership, and persistence. It is present in the way women hold together whānau, communities, and the sector itself.

This journey also extended beyond Aotearoa, through engagement with Mapuche communities from Patagonia.

What stood out was not difference — it was how much felt familiar.

The Mapuche people shared experiences of navigating challenges around land, language, identity, and voice. Like Māori, they continue to work within systems that have not always reflected or supported their ways of being.

Their experiences reinforced that participation alone has not ensured protection. Voice, recognition, and self-determination remain central.

Despite this, there was strength — a deep connection to whenua, a commitment to future generations, and a clear sense of identity. These shared experiences reflect what Smith (2012) describes — that Indigenous communities continue to navigate systems that do not align with their realities, and that sustaining identity and voice remains critical.

This connection is not accidental.

It reflects a wider Indigenous experience — where land, language, identity, and voice are deeply interconnected. The loss of one impacts the others.

The kaupapa of this research — \*Not one more acre of Māori land... not one more voice lost\* — does not sit within Aotearoa alone.

It is shared. And it carries responsibility.

Because if we do not create spaces where wāhine voices are visible, valued, and sustained — we risk more than low participation.

We risk losing knowledge.

We risk losing identity.

We risk losing the voices that will shape the future of the Agri sector.

This research is not the end of that journey.

It is part of it.

“Not one more acre of Māori land... not one more voice lost...”

And yet, the question remains “Kei hea taku reo?”

This research has shown that the question is not whether wāhine are participating — it is whether that participation is recognised and able to shape the future.

## 8.0 Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations. The research is based on a qualitative approach with a small number of participants, which limits the ability to generalise findings across the wider Agri sector. The experiences shared reflect individual perspectives and may not represent all women within the sector. Additionally, participation was influenced by availability and time constraints, which may have limited the diversity of responses. There is also the potential for access and selection bias, as participants are more likely to be individuals already connected to networks or willing to engage in research. The scope of the study was limited to the timeframe of the research, which restricted the ability to explore changes in participation over a longer period. Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into how networks shape participation, visibility, and leadership, particularly for wāhine Māori.

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## 10.0 Appendix A - Waiata

This research draws on the waiata \*Kei Hea Taku Reo\* by Whirimako Black to reflect themes of voice, identity, and cultural continuity.

Due to copyright restrictions, full lyrics are not reproduced in this report. Readers are encouraged to engage directly with the waiata through the following source:

[Kei Hea Taku Reo](#) (click on the link)

The waiata explores the experience of searching for voice, and the broader themes of language revitalisation, identity, and belonging. These themes strongly align with the findings of this research, particularly in relation to voice, participation, and the risk of exclusion within systems and networks.

## 10.1 Appendix B: Participant Questionnaire

### A. Experiences With Networks

1. What networks or groups are you currently part of within the agrisector?
2. How did you become involved in these networks?
3. What motivates your participation, or what limits it?

### B. Benefits & Purpose

4. How have these networks supported you professionally, personally, culturally, or socially? –
5. Have these networks contributed to your capability, leadership, wellbeing, or confidence?  
How?
6. Can you give an example of a time when a network strengthened your resilience?

### C. Barriers & Enablers

7. What makes it easier—or harder—for women to participate in agrisector networks?
8. What structural, cultural, or practical barriers do you see for women?
9. What supports would help strengthen women's resilience across the sector?

### D. Meaning of Resilience

10. What does resilience mean to you in your work or role?
11. How do your identity, background, or experiences shape the way you navigate challenges?

### E. Aspirations

12. What would you like to see change or improve for wāhine across the agrisector?

## 10.2 Appendix C: Thematic Analysis

This table outlines the thematic coding and synthesis process used to analyse interview data across participants

### THEME 1: Connection, Belonging and Relational Engagement

| Sub-theme                | Evidence                                                               | Interpretation                                 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Sense of belonging       | "Feels like community"                                                 | Networks foster connection                     |
| Shared experience        | "Problems aren't yours alone"                                          | Normalises challenges                          |
|                          | "Socially is the big one, just being in a group of women is different" | Networks reduce isolation and create belonging |
| Relational support       | "People you can call"                                                  | Builds trust networks                          |
| Connection as identity   | "Connecting... it's important"                                         | Intrinsic value                                |
| Shared industry identity | "People sharing passion"                                               | Strengthens belonging                          |

### THEME 2: Growth, Learning and Capability

| Sub-theme                 | Evidence                                               | Interpretation                                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Learning through exposure | "Being in the same room"                               | Informal learning                                             |
| Confidence building       | "Courage and confidence...opportunity to get involved" | Networks build confidence leading to leadership participation |
| Experience-based learning | "Based on experience"                                  | Practical knowledge development                               |
| Ongoing learning          | "Never stop learning"                                  | Continuous growth mindset                                     |
| Enabling others           | "Expose them... they don't know"                       | Knowledge transfer                                            |
| Practical capability      | "Mixed use skills"                                     | Applied development                                           |

### THEME 3: Support, Reciprocity and Collective Strength

| Sub-theme                         | Evidence                                                            | Interpretation                |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Relational support                | "People you can call"                                               | Emotional + practical support |
| Constructive support              | "What are you going to do?"                                         | Encourages action             |
| Collective reciprocity            | "Help each other"                                                   | Shared responsibility         |
| Relational/family support         | "You can't do these things by yourself... you need support at home" | Enabling support              |
| Competing responsibilities        | "Busy, home, every woman needs support..partner, mother, sister"    | Role pressures                |
| Life stage/caregiving constraints | "Couldn't have done this with children"                             | Timing constraints            |
| Supporting others                 | "Benefited others"                                                  | Outward focus                 |
| Building independence             | "Build them to be self-sufficient"                                  | Long-term capability          |
| Shared resilience                 | "Lift each other"                                                   | Collective strength           |

### THEME 4: Opportunity, Leadership and Progression

| Sub-theme               | Evidence                                                        | Interpretation                                                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expanding opportunities | "More opportunity now"                                          | Shifting sector landscape                                      |
|                         | "You've got to be in those spaces – that's where things happen" | Presence within networks enables access to leadership pathways |
| Leadership visibility   | "Women leading roles"                                           | Increased participation                                        |
| Confidence development  | "Confidence to govern"                                          | Capability growth                                              |
| Mentoring pathways      | "Mentored to move forward"                                      | Progression pathways                                           |
| Voice and influence     | "More outspoken... change narrative"                            | Leadership emergence                                           |

## THEME 5: Values, Culture and Positive Environments

| Sub-theme             | Evidence                    | Interpretation              |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Positive environments | "Be around positive people" | Values-driven participation |
| Passion and purpose   | "Passion for people/whenua" | Motivational driver         |
| Energising spaces     | "Energising environments"   | Sustains engagement         |
| Care and authenticity | "Care about people"         | Relational values           |
| Cultural grounding    | Whānau / whenua references  | Identity and belonging      |

## THEME 6: Systems, Structures and Community Contexts

| Sub-theme             | Evidence                           | Interpretation            |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Structural inequality | "Not on the same playing field"    | Unequal systems           |
| Gender barriers       | "Male dominated... hard for women" | Participation constraints |
| Representation gaps   | "Need more representation"         | Lack of visibility        |
| System navigation     | "Cover the gap"                    | Networks compensate       |
| Practical barriers    | "Time, cost, family"               | Access limitations        |
| Regional differences  | "Rural-urban differences"          | Context matters           |
| System change         | "Things are shifting"              | Progress underway         |
|                       |                                    |                           |

## THEME 7: Purpose, Identity and Leadership

| Sub-theme               | Evidence                | Interpretation        |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Purpose-driven          | "For our people"        | Collective motivation |
| Identity and belief     | "Believe in yourself"   | Personal agency       |
| Contribution            | "Proud of contribution" | Value recognition     |
| Intergenerational focus | "Future generations"    | Long-term thinking    |
| Values-based action     | "Keep pushing values"   | Integrity in action   |

## THEME 8: Resilience as Capacity, Momentum and Influence

| Sub-theme                | Evidence                                 | Interpretation              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Relational resilience    | "Not isolated"                           | Strength through connection |
| Support-based resilience | "People you can call"                    | Network safety net          |
| Internal resilience      | "Managing pressure"                      | Emotional regulation        |
| Adaptive resilience      | "Bounce back"                            | Flexibility                 |
| Persistence              | "Keep going"                             | Endurance                   |
| Developmental resilience | "Learning builds capability"             | Growth over time            |
| Agency                   | "Establish yourself... influence change" | Active resilience           |
| Overcoming challenges    | "Resilience = overcoming"                | Forward movement            |
| Collective resilience    | "Lift each other"                        | Shared strength             |
| Future-focused           | "Stay relevant"                          | Sustainability              |
| Inner strength           | "Good days and bad days"                 | Purpose driven resilience   |

### 10.3 Appendix D: Contextual Reflection – Mapuche Delegation and Te Tawa Kaiti

This appendix provides context for an Indigenous cultural exchange between Māori and Mapuche communities, including representatives connected to Argentina's National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA). INTA is a national agricultural research institution focused on sustainable farming systems and rural development, including work alongside Indigenous communities.

The focus of this engagement was to learn from farming systems in practice. Those involved travelled to Aotearoa to understand how different systems operate within Māori contexts and how these approaches might inform and be adapted within their own environments.

Te Tawa Kaiti Lands Trust hosted and coordinated the exchange. In my role as General Manager, I co-led the engagement alongside a colleague, developing a structured itinerary that enabled direct engagement with a range of farming systems.

The programme extended beyond Te Tawa Kaiti to include Māori agribusinesses across four iwi, spanning dairy, horticulture, and broader land-based farming operations. While the itinerary also included tourism and aquaculture, these provided context for how wider economic activities connect to and support primary production systems.

At Te Tawa Kaiti, the integration of innovation within a working farming system was observed, including regenerative pasture trials, solar power, and approaches aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These demonstrate efforts to balance productivity with environmental outcomes.

As noted by Tāmāti Kruger, “our moral objective as Indigenous peoples is to represent nature, not own it” (Kruger, n.d.). This perspective was reflected in how land was approached across the systems observed, where decision-making is informed by a relationship with whenua.

This aligns with the whakataukī “Whatungarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua” (as people disappear, the land remains), reinforcing the ongoing responsibility to care for whenua (Māori proverb, n.d.). Although we are from opposite sides of the globe, there was an immediate and enduring connection — understood in te ao Māori as *Ukaipōtanga*, a sense of belonging to place and origin.

For the Mapuche people (*Mapu* meaning land, *Che* meaning people), including those connected to INTA, the key learning was not replication, but adaptation. While farming systems can be shared, their application must reflect local environmental conditions, cultural values, and governance structures.

In the context of this research, this exchange provides practical evidence of how participation extends beyond local settings, enabling knowledge sharing, strengthening capability, and supporting leadership across Indigenous communities.



## Apéndice D: Intercambio Cultural Indígena y Sistemas de Producción Agropecuaria

Este apéndice proporciona contexto para un intercambio cultural indígena entre comunidades Māori y Mapuche, incluyendo representantes vinculados al Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA) de Argentina. INTA es una institución nacional de investigación agropecuaria enfocada en apoyar sistemas agrícolas sostenibles y el desarrollo rural, incluyendo el trabajo con comunidades indígenas.

El foco de este intercambio fue aprender de los sistemas de producción agropecuaria en la práctica. La delegación Mapuche, incluyendo representantes vinculados a INTA, viajó a Aotearoa para comprender cómo operan distintos sistemas productivos en contextos Māori y cómo estos enfoques podrían informar, desarrollar y adaptarse en sus propios entornos.

Te Tawa Kaiti Lands Trust desempeñó un rol central en la organización y coordinación de este intercambio. En mi rol como Gerente General, co-lideré la iniciativa junto con un colega, desarrollando un itinerario estructurado que permitió a la delegación interactuar directamente con una variedad de sistemas productivos en distintos iwi.

La visita se extendió más allá de Te Tawa Kaiti e incluyó empresas Māori en cuatro iwi, abarcando producción lechera, horticultura y otros sistemas productivos basados en la tierra. Si bien el itinerario también incluyó turismo y acuicultura, estos aportaron contexto sobre cómo la actividad económica Māori se conecta y apoya los sistemas de producción primaria.

En Te Tawa Kaiti, la delegación observó la integración de innovación dentro de un sistema productivo en funcionamiento, incluyendo ensayos de praderas regenerativas, el uso de energía solar y enfoques orientados a reducir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero. Estos reflejan un esfuerzo deliberado por equilibrar la productividad con los resultados ambientales.

Como señala Tāmāti Kruger, “nuestro objetivo moral como pueblos indígenas es representar la naturaleza, no poseerla” (Kruger, n.d.). Este principio estuvo presente en la forma en que se abordó la relación con la tierra (*whenua*), donde las decisiones reflejan una conexión con el entorno más que una lógica de propiedad.

Esto se alinea con el whakataukī: “Whatungarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua” (las personas desaparecen, la tierra permanece), el cual refuerza la responsabilidad de cuidar la tierra a lo largo del tiempo (proverbio Māori, n.d.).

Para la delegación Mapuche, incluyendo los representantes de INTA, el aprendizaje clave no fue la replicación, sino la adaptación. Si bien los sistemas pueden compartirse, su aplicación debe responder a las condiciones ambientales, los valores culturales y las estructuras de gobernanza propias de cada contexto.

Si bien este intercambio no formó parte formal de esta investigación, su relevancia surgió a través de la reflexión. El kaupapa — “Not one more acre of Māori land... not one more voice lost” — resonó fuertemente con las experiencias compartidas por los miembros de la delegación Mapuche. Sus desafíos continuos en la retención de tierras, la protección de la identidad cultural y la sostenibilidad de la voz indígena reflejan realidades similares, destacando un contexto indígena compartido a pesar de las diferencias territoriales e históricas.

En el contexto de esta investigación, este intercambio proporciona evidencia práctica de cómo la participación trasciende lo local, permitiendo el intercambio de conocimientos, el fortalecimiento de capacidades y el desarrollo de liderazgo entre comunidades indígenas.

## 11.0 Glossary

### **Aroha**

A concept encompassing love, compassion, empathy, and respect. Aroha extends beyond emotion to include actions that demonstrate care and support for others within relationships and communities.

### **Hapū**

A sub-tribal group linked through whakapapa. Hapū function as important social and political units within Māori society, often responsible for collective decision-making and resource management.

### **Iwi**

A tribe or large kinship group connected through shared ancestry. Iwi represent extended collective structures that maintain identity, governance, and cultural continuity.

### **Kaitiakitanga**

The principle of guardianship and stewardship over the natural environment. It reflects a responsibility to protect and sustain resources for current and future generations.

### **Kanohi ki te kanohi**

Face-to-face interaction that emphasises direct, personal connection and relationship-building. It is a key aspect of whakawhanaungatanga and meaningful engagement.

### **Kaupapa**

A guiding principle, purpose, or collective vision that provides direction for an activity, project, or organisation.

### **Mana**

Authority, influence, prestige, and spiritual power. Mana is both inherited through whakapapa and earned through actions, relationships, and contribution to others.

### **Manaakitanga**

The expression of care, hospitality, generosity, and support for others. It reflects the responsibility to uplift people and maintain respectful relationships.

### **Mana wāhine**

A framework recognising the authority, strength, and leadership of Māori women. It centres wāhine perspectives and acknowledges their roles within social, cultural, and political contexts.

### **Mātauranga Māori**

The body of Māori knowledge passed down through generations. It encompasses worldview, cultural practices, environmental understanding, and ways of knowing.

### **Mokopuna**

Grandchildren or future generations. Often used conceptually to emphasise long-term thinking and intergenerational responsibility.

### **Rangatiratanga**

Leadership, autonomy, and self-determination. It reflects the ability to make decisions and exercise authority within a collective context.

### **Taiao**

The natural environment, including land, water, and ecosystems. It reflects the interconnected relationship between people and the natural world.

**Tikanga**

Customs, values, and practices that guide behaviour within Māori society. Tikanga provides a framework for appropriate conduct and decision-making.

**Tūrangawaewae**

A place of belonging and identity where an individual feels empowered and connected. It represents both a physical place and a sense of grounding.

**Ukaipōtanga**

A place of nurturing and belonging where individuals draw strength and support. It is often associated with origins, home, and connection to whānau.

**Whakapapa**

Genealogy and relational connections linking individuals to ancestors, land, and the wider environment. It forms the basis of identity and belonging.

**Whakawhanaungatanga**

The process of building and maintaining relationships through shared experiences, interaction, and connection.

**Whānau**

Extended family or collective group connected through whakapapa or shared purpose. Whānau provide support, identity, and belonging.

**Whanaungatanga**

The concept of relationships, kinship, and connection. It emphasises the importance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships within communities.