

Understanding decision making that leads to careers in the Primary Industries

Primary Industry
Capability Alliance

November 2016



Background and objectives

BACKGROUND

- The Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA) was formed to provide a stronger level of coordination and collaboration to promote a better understanding of the primary industries and to attract people to careers within the primary sector. The *Future Capability Report* (a driver in the formation of the Alliance) has identified that in order to achieve growth targets, there is a need to attract a large number of highly skilled people into primary sector careers.
- The Alliance working groups, member organisations, and the wider sector need to build an understanding of the current context of career choices. There is a need to, firstly, set baseline measures for the awareness, understanding, attractiveness, and consideration of careers in the primary sector. Beyond this there is a need to understand what it would take to shift each of those factors (awareness, understanding, attractiveness, and consideration) in favour of the primary sector.

OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this projects focussing on secondary school students are to:

- 1 Establish a baseline of secondary school students' current levels of awareness and consideration of, and attitudes towards careers in the primary industries.
- 2 Understand the things that influence their career decision making and what would lead them into tertiary-level study related to the primary industries and into primary industry careers.



MIXED METHOD RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research

Approach: Two approaches were used for the qualitative research: a two day on-line forum with 43 young people, and in-depth 90 minute individual qualitative interviews with 20 young people.

Fieldwork dates: 8 to 31 August 2016.

Target population: People were screened to ensure they were aged 16-26 years, had spent their schooling years in an urban location, would consider a career in the primary industries and were either senior secondary school students, second year tertiary students or first year employees in the primary industries.

The following table shows the breakdown of the total sample.

	SAMPLE NUMBER INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS	SAMPLE NUMBER ON-LINE FORUM	TOTAL
Year 12 and 13 students	6	20	26
Second year tertiary students	6	13	19
First year primary sector employees	8	10	18
Total number of interviews	20	43	63

Recruitment: Participants were recruited via the Colmar Brunton online panel and through networking.

Quantitative research

Approach: 470 nationally representative online interviews with secondary school students, and their parents - 20 minute duration overall (evenly split between students and parents).

Fieldwork dates: 12 October to 7 November 2016.

Target population: Year 11 to 13 students, studying at least two maths, science, commerce or technology subjects, and planning to leave secondary school at the end of the 2016 academic year.

Sampling: The students were sourced via their parents using the Colmar Brunton online panel.

Incentives: The parents received 10 Fly Buys points for their participation, and the students went into the draw for \$500 cash, or one of five \$100 cash prizes.

Weighting: Following fieldwork the survey data was weighted by gender within region and ethnicity to ensure it was representative on those variables.

Sampling error and significance testing: Results for a random sample size of 470 are normally subject to a maximum margin of error of +/- 4.5% at the 95% confidence level. Where possible we also report differences in the results by gender, ethnicity, region and area type (urban, provincial, rural). Note that results for subgroups will be subject to wider margins of error and differences are only reported if they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Summary of key results and recommendations

STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Both the qualitative and quantitative research indicate students have very low familiarity, awareness, and knowledge of the primary industries/sector. They have difficulty defining what the industry may encompass and tend to focus primarily on hands-on farming – sheep, cattle and dairy. These hands-on roles are of limited interest to many of these students.

- Most students have at least heard of the Primary Industries (85%), but their level of self-reported knowledge is relatively low overall, with just 16% saying they know a lot or a fair amount about the Primary Industries.
- Students who knew at least a little about the Primary Industries were asked to define it. By far the students' most common definition of the Primary Industries is farming/agriculture (46%). These students were also asked to list up to ten jobs and roles they knew of in the Primary Industries. Students identify a wide variety of occupations, but in line with their definitions of the Primary industries the main one mentioned is farm worker (63%), followed by forestry worker (27%), or fisheries worker (20%).
- When students are prompted with a list of possible jobs in the Primary Industries, the ones they most closely associate it with are those relating to farming/agriculture, forestry and beekeeping (more than half of all students select them). Robotics engineer (22%) and landscape architect (29%) are the least known jobs within the Primary Industries.

STUDENT'S CONSIDERATION OF A CAREER IN THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Both the qualitative and quantitative research show that students have very low consideration of the primary industries/sector.

- Two in ten have considered a career in the Primary Industries before (22%).
- When students are presented with a list of specific jobs in the Primary Industries, their most considered job is Robotics engineer (16% plan to do this job or would seriously consider it), and their least considered jobs are farm manager, forest manager and beekeeper (less than 10% plan to do each of these jobs or would seriously consider them). The most considered job is therefore the least known Primary Industry job, and the least considered jobs are the most well known Primary Industry jobs.

Both the qualitative and quantitative research suggest that while most students have a low level of knowledge about the Primary Industries, once they are informed about what the Primary Industries cover (beyond farming/agriculture) and the wide variety of jobs and roles to choose from, they are more open to considering a future career within the sector. It appears to be the job itself, rather than the industry it is in that holds appeal.

Recommendation: Raise students' awareness of what the Primary Industries cover, especially the range of jobs and roles that are available, and in particular the technical jobs that are on offer so they're on student's 'radar'.

Summary of key results and recommendations

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Based on some of the attitudes expressed in the qualitative research we developed a number of positive statements about the Primary Industries and measured the extent to which students agreed with these statements in the quantitative survey.

Relative strengths for the Primary Industries



The statements that students **agree with most** include:

- The Primary Industries make a substantial contribution to New Zealand's economy (75% agree).
- There are job roles for urban and rurally based people in the Primary Industries (64% agree).
- There are opportunities to innovate, generate new ideas, problem solve, add value in the Primary Industries (64% agree).
- The Primary Industries use sophisticated technologies and equipment (62% agree).
- There is a need for more people with high-level skills in the Primary Industries (62% agree).

Relative weaknesses for the Primary Industries



The statements that students **agree with least** include:

- High achieving students enter careers in the Primary Industries (41% agree).
- My family would encourage me to pursue a career in the Primary Industries (41% agree).
- A career in the Primary Industries is highly appealing (44% agree).
- The Primary Industries offer equal career opportunities for men and women (45% agree).

Recommendation: Provide students with evidence to dispel misconceptions they may have about the Primary Industries, in particular challenging any stigma that it is not a place for high achieving students.

Summary of key results and recommendations

Influencers on students' career decision making and what would lead students' into tertiary-level study related to the primary industries and into primary industry careers.

INFLUENTIAL MOTIVATORS

The qualitative research identified a range of motivations that influence students' career decision making. These fourteen factors were measured in the quantitative survey to determine the relative strength of each motivator.

Highly motivating factors (in descending order) include:

1. Good employment opportunities (skills shortage, high demand for employees in this area, growth opportunities, study leads to a job, lots of options)
2. Has international connections (which could allow you to travel and work overseas)
3. Variety (no two days at work being the same, learning new things, never being bored)
4. Intellectually stimulating and challenging work (opportunities for research, solving problems, being solutions-based, adding value)
5. Access to tertiary study options (something for everyone, scholarships combined with summer jobs to reduce student debt)
6. Having freedom (being your own boss, flexibility in hours, being outside rather than in an office)
7. Working in a growth industry with lots of new and exciting developments (rather than a struggling/declining industry)
8. Using technological skills (developing and applying new technologies and specialist skills)
9. Connecting, working with and supporting people

Factors 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 are not currently strongly associated with the Primary Industries by students, so should be promoted as a first priority. Factors 1, 2, 3 and 8 are already strongly associated with the Primary Industries by students, so should be promoted as a secondary priority.

INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Both the qualitative and quantitative research indicate that people working in the types of jobs students are interested in will have the most influence on their eventual career choice, followed by parents. The strongest advocates of the range of opportunities and the benefits available in the Primary Industries tend to be young people studying towards the industry or working in the industry. Students (both secondary and tertiary) suggest hearing their stories (in person and online) would prompt their interest and engagement. This would also lead to more direct pathways into the industry as compared to the current situation which appears to be 'hit and miss'.

Recommendation: Utilise people working in the Primary Industries in your communications with students (preferably those in technical jobs), and promote the most highly motivating aspects of working in the Primary Industries (particularly the lesser well known ones).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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