

THE STATE OF LEADER DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ZEALAND'S FOOD AND FIBRE SECTOR.



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Key findings.
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**RURAL
LEADERS**

Growing
world-class leaders
for our country







The State of Leader
Development in
New Zealand's
Food and Fibre Sector.

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and Dr Ellen Joan Nelson.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
One. Introduction	8
Background	8
We Need to Grow Our Own Hogget's: A Leading Sector Needs Leaders	10
Scope	11
Methodology	11
The Leadership Development Programme Landscape	13
Key Findings	13
Two. Structural, Contextual, Strategic	14
A. Professionalise the Industry	14
B. Strategic Thinking and Wider Contribution	15
- B.1. Versatility and Collaboration	16
- B.2. Perspectives and Sound Judgement	16
- B.3. Macro and Future Thinking	16
C. Leadership Matters	17
- C.1. Define Leadership	17
- C.2. Hesitancy Around Leadership	17
- C.3. What is the Value in Leadership Development?	19
D. Level and Type of Leadership Development Required	20
- D.1. Levels of Leadership Needed	21
- D.2. Context and Functional Development Needed	22
E. An Eco-system of Leader and Leadership Development Needed	23
- E.1. Leadership Framework and Pathways are Needed	23
- E.2. A Blended Approach, Including Practical Development is Needed	23
- E.3. Mentoring and Coaching is Useful	24
- E.4. Exemplars are Helpful for Illustrating Good Leadership	24
- E.5. Need for Qualifications? Capture Value Do Not Just Create it	24
- E.6. Who to Deliver the Programmes?	25
- E.7. Cohorts and Networks are Key	25
Section Summary	26

Three. Leadership Principles	27
Introduction	27
 P.1 Leading Others is a Privilege	30
- P.1.1. Leading versus Leadership	31
- P.1.2. Select, Equip and Support	31
- P.1.3. Humble Confidence	31
 P.2. Grounded	32
- 2.1. Practical	33
- 2.2. Naturally Grounded	33
- 2.3. Culturally Attuned	33
- 2.4. Community-Minded	33
 P.3. Leaders Build Relationships	34
- P.3.1. People First	35
- P.3.2. Influence, Don't Rule	35
 P.4. Leadership is About Teamwork	36
- P.4.1. Set the Team Culture	36
- P.4.2. Connect People and Purpose	37
- P.4.3. Harness the Horsepower of Diversity	37
- P.4.4. Build Belonging	37
- P.4.5. Connect, Don't Just Communicate	37
 P.5. Leaders are Accountable	38
- P.5.1. It is About Accountability, Not Importance	39
- P.5.2. Enable Timely and Effective Decision-making	39
- P.5.3. Leadership Comes With Scars	40
 P.6. Unleash the Potential in Others	42
- P.6.1. When You Give Power Away It Becomes Infinite	43
- P.6.2. Build Confidence in Others	43
- P.6.3. Provide Mission Leadership	43
- P.6.4. Be Uncomfortable; Failure is a Stepping-Stone Not an Anchor-Stone	43
- P.6.5. Build Resilience	44
Section Summary	45
Four. Conclusion	46
Five. Annexes:	48
Snapshot of Leadership Development Programmes	48
Acknowledgements	49

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report presents findings on the state of leadership development in Aotearoa New Zealand's Food and Fibre Sector.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Food and Fibre Sector includes the primary sector production industries (other than mining) and the related processing industries. It also includes service industries along the value chain from producer to final consumer, including providers of transport, storage, distribution, marketing, and sales.¹

One: There are various leadership programmes across the sector, targeted at varying leadership levels. While many of these programmes are rated highly by sector leaders, it is clear that the majority of staff within the sector are not accessing leadership training, and for those that do, the leadership development pathways are often disjointed, and unclear.

Further, many of the professional development programmes do not focus solely on leadership, and in some cases, leadership is only a very small component. A table providing a brief overview of the types of leadership programmes available in the sector is provided at Annex A. The table is not exhaustive but gives a good snapshot of the development programmes available.

Two: The data provided some clear themes in terms of structural, contextual, and strategic desires from interview participants:

Professionalise. Professionalise the industry and improve the sector's capability, profitability and reputation.

Work together. Better collaboration between organisations pan-sector, and beyond the sector into New Zealand Inc.

Versatility. Better versatility and more seamless movement of talent between organisations across the sector.

External Perspective. A need for international, customer and broader macro perspectives and trends.

Valuing Leadership. Education of the commercial benefits to investing in leadership development.



¹Dalziel P., Saunders C., and Saunders J., (2018). The New Zealand Food and Fibre Sector: A Situational Analysis. Client report prepared for the Primary Sector Council. Lincoln University: Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit, p. vii. Available at: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/33457/direct> (Accessed 30 August 2021).

Accessibility. Leadership training needs to be accessible and inclusive with clear benefits to individuals (it is not just for people with titles).

Stepping-stones. The sector needs leaders developed at every level (self, team, operational, strategic, and governance).

Pathways. The sector needs clear pathways and linkages for leadership development.

Qualifications. The sector needs well designed programmes that do not just create value, but also capture and benchmark value through qualifications and credentials (where appropriate).

There is Power in High Trust Cohorts. Cohorts, networks, and mentors add value.

Three: The data also provided themes regarding what leadership means to people, these were synthesised into six leadership principles which, are likely to be relevant to the Food and Fibre sector:

A privilege. Everyone can and should lead, whether they hold a title or a position, or do not. However, it is a privilege to take on the mantle of leadership. Those who aspire to leadership need to be selected, equipped for and supported in the role, due to the exponential impact (for good or bad) that leaders can have on others and on organisational objectives.

Grounded. The Food and Fibre sector is unique in its connection to Taiao (the natural world).

The people who work the land and water prefer practical, humble, straight-forward leaders who are competent and community-minded and who have a purposeful passion for providing life sustaining Food and Fibre.

Relationships. Leading is not just about relationships, it is all about relationships.

Teamwork. Leaders turn groups into teams. To do so they harness diversity, build belonging, and connect the team to a unifying purpose.

Accountability. Leadership is not about importance; it is about accountability. A leader's accountability is indivisible, but they can and should build the capabilities of their team so that they can delegate authority and responsibility. This requires leaders to exercise both trust and moral courage.

Unleash the Potential in Others. The best leaders in the Food and Fibre sector are those that promote the conditions for others to be their best.

In summary, there are some valuable programmes available in the sector, but more linkages and pathways between them are needed. In addition, there are gaps where no programmes exist, further solutions are required to address these. The sector sees the benefits of developing a leadership framework and has begun the process of identifying key principles to be included in leadership training. There is a strong desire to increase collaboration across the sector and to broaden the people skills, perspectives, and strategic thinking of its leaders.

An impetus for change is that the current state of leadership development is ad hoc. As referenced in the report there are no clear pathway options for people to plan their own progression. Very few of the existing programmes build cumulatively on each other, almost none have any education qualifications attached (exceptions include the 'Primary ITO' Level 3 Leadership Course and the Kellogg Rural Leadership

Programme) and most people in leadership roles have had little or no training, or if they have, it has often been received years after taking up leadership responsibilities. This is symptomatic of a sector that has succeeded through technical competence but has not paused to define what it wants from leadership.

As a result, most leaders muddle through developing their relational skills by trial and error.

The sector then, having no better means, uses business success and technical prowess, as proxies for leadership competence (without considering the impact on people as a worthwhile measure of leadership competence). This is not unique to the Food and Fibre sector. According to Gallup's 2022 global workforce survey, 77% of workers globally were disengaged. Compared to engaged workers they were 23% less profitable.

It follows that a thriving leadership culture in which people are engaged and developed is commercially smart.

To grow a leadership culture requires a clear idea of what leadership principles and characteristics are relevant to the sector. The research team asked interviewees this question.

The 202 observations this question generated have been synthesised into six potential principles (general truths) with twenty-two supporting characteristics (features or qualities). These will be further validated and refined in the next stage of the project.



77%

OF WORKERS GLOBALLY
ARE DISENGAGED.*

*GALLUP GLOBAL
WORKFORCE SURVEY, 2022.



1. INTRODUCTION

A manager's effect on a workplace is so significant that Gallup can predict 70% of the variance in team engagement just by getting to know the boss... A bad boss will ignore you, disrespect you and never support you. Environments like that can make anyone miserable.

...95% of people who are thriving at work report being treated with respect all day and 87% report smiling and laughing a lot...as it turns out, it pays to have thriving workers.

Business units with engaged workers have 23% higher profit compared with business units with miserable workers.²

GALLUP

BACKGROUND

Deregulation in the 1980s dismantled many of Aotearoa New Zealand's government and industry training institutions. The survivors of deregulation learned to be lean and highly productive. As a result primary industries are, year on year, the most productive of all Aotearoa New Zealand sectors and we have become one of the most efficient Food and Fibre producing nations in the world.

This is not just a nice success story; it is hugely material to the nation's wellbeing.

As of June 2022 Food and Fibre represented 82% of total exports (MPI, June 2022). But, there is a cloud to the Food and Fibre sector's silver-lining. Worryingly, productivity growth peaked in the decade following deregulation (1985).

Since then, it has been declining. Furthermore, results were achieved in an era of relative geo-political stability, plentiful labour born of the baby boomer generation, and with an ethic of hard-work.

That world has gone. Today the sector faces what most commentators call a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) era where risks constantly evolve and interact with each other.³

Figure 1. Productivity decline.



²Gallup, (2022), State of the Global Workplace 2022 Report THE VOICE OF THE WORLD'S EMPLOYEES, (pp. 3-4.)

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace-2022-report.aspx>

³VUCA draws from leadership theories such as Warren Bennis (an American Scholar) and Burt Nanus (a retired Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California) from as early as 1987. A good summary is provided here - <https://hbr.org/2014/01/what-vuca-really-means-for-you>. KPMG goes as far as to call it VUCA2. KPMG, (June, 2021), Agri-Business Agenda 2021 New Zealand, our consumers, and our 2040 Future., p. 15.



Today there is a persistent and global shortage of talent as the boomer generation passes into retirement and is replaced by numerically smaller cohorts (X, Millennial, Z). At the same time, the relative stability of the globalised system, that Aotearoa New Zealand relies on for its export trade, is being challenged and redefined. Added to this, there are rapid and sustained environmental changes that are significantly impacting the sector, its communities and the expectations of its customers and stakeholders.

In a VUCA world it is not possible to design a system for every eventuality. The sector needs to develop adaptive teams that can thrive in uncertainty.

Despite pockets of exceptional performance, the symptoms of poor leadership behaviours are widespread across the Food and Fibre sector. The sector struggles to attract talent.⁴ It faces some of the highest industry talent loss rates of any sector in Aotearoa New Zealand (71% of new entrants / 3 years). The sector has high internal staff churn (20-50% / year), high numbers of injuries and death, high rates of stress, succession challenges, low-productivity (relative to New Zealand's OECD comparators), low-margin businesses, low education levels,⁵ and slower than ideal adaptation rates. These symptoms of a sub-optimal system lead to higher than necessary environmental impacts, challenges to the sector's social license, increasing regulation and a reduced ability to deliver for the country.

To make the next productivity leap the sector needs to focus on developing and engaging its people. In their seminal book, *The Wisdom of Teams*, Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith observe that high-performing teams produce superior performances to other teams. The exciting opportunity is that people of normal ability can achieve extraordinary results when part of a high-performing team.

It is the teamwork that produces high performance – not the brilliance of any one single performer. In fact, it has been repeatedly demonstrated in elite sports that a *group* of star performers under-performs a team of good athletes working together brilliantly.

The phenomenon that initiates and sustains teamwork – is leadership. The sector needs a deep bench of high-performing leaders at every level and, by extension; organisations that are adaptive, authentic, entrepreneurial, and resilient.

The sector prides itself on working hard, it must now become synonymous with working smart if it is to thrive in a VUCA world characterised by global talent scarcity and accelerating change.

We need to grow our own hoggets: A leading sector needs leaders.

The hypothesis is that the sector needs talent progression pathways that can embrace its diversity and scale: if Aotearoa New Zealand is to remain at the global forefront of Food and Fibre-growing nations while also shouldering its kaitiaki (guardian) responsibilities to its people and the environment.

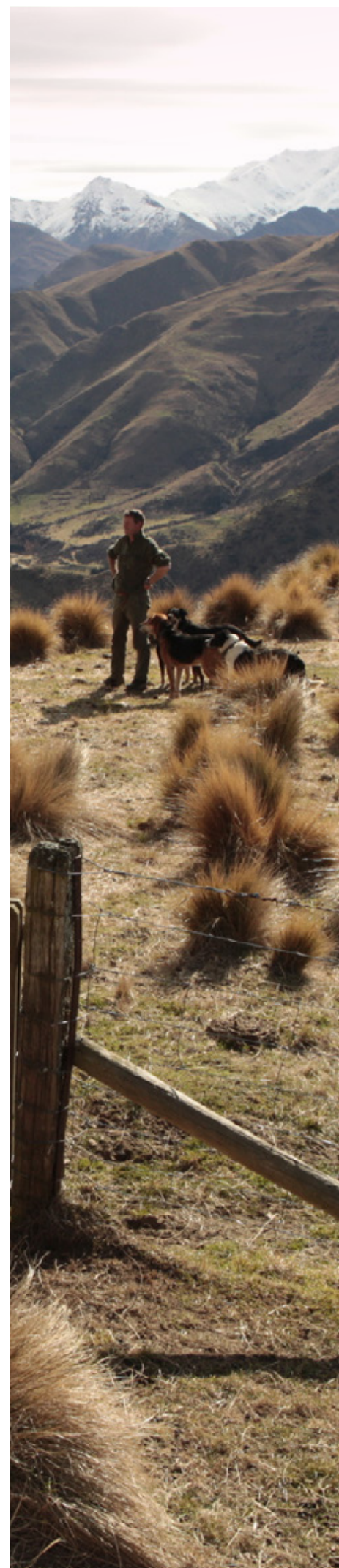
Strengthening the rural leadership benches will address a key underlying cause of low engagement rates, high staff *quit* rates, stress, and underperforming teams and businesses.

Given the Food and Fibre sector creates the bulk of Aotearoa New Zealand's export revenue, creating pathways for people to develop and take on increasing responsibility can have a multiplier effect on the nation's future prosperity that goes beyond the impact that leadership systems in other sectors can create.



⁴We need to develop cultural acuity within our leadership system to reflect New Zealand's changing demographics. NZ Stats predicts that the much younger age structure of Māori, Pacifica, and Asian populations means that by 2043 they will be 50% of the working-age population, compared with 37% in 2018. See NZ Statistics

⁵With some notable exceptions, including Rocket Apples and Kiwifruit Gold.



SCOPE

This report investigates the state of leadership development in Aotearoa New Zealand's Food and Fibre sector.

To increase the validity of findings, interviews were also conducted with United Kingdom and Australian counterparts, and conversations were had with selected individuals outside of the sector.

Given the Food and Fibre sector encompasses 367,000 people, it was not possible to interview everybody or every organisation. New Zealand Rural Leaders identified 39 organisations (as listed on page 47) that together represented a broad spectrum of the sector, its segments, and industries.

Most of the interviews were with people in senior roles.



In the next stage of the project, focus groups will be conducted to seek further comment from a broader base, including those from field and frontline roles through to strategic roles.

METHODOLOGY

60 people from 39 organisations were interviewed in 42 interviews. This included 10 Māori cultural and agri-business perspectives (17%), 14 producers and processors (24%), 11 from industry-good organisations (18%), 13 from industry-supporting organisations (22%), four from industry-services organisations (7%), 10 government representatives (17%), and seven international or out-of-sector participants (12%).

The views gathered to date are by no means exhaustive, but they provide a platform on which to build additional perspectives in subsequent stages of the project.

Table 1: Demographics of those interviewed.

Interviews conducted	42			
People consulted	60			
Organisations	39			
Gender Distribution	54% female	46% male		
Geographic Distribution	63% North Island	27% South Island	10% International	
Role Distribution	51% Strategic roles (Governance & C-Suite)	34% High operational and operational roles (GMs, Directors & Managers)	15% Hands-on roles (Farmers, Educators)	
Distribution by systems (for those contributing to specific industries)	Pastoral systems Dairy 41% Red Meat 14%	Plant-based systems Horticulture 24% Forestry 7% Arable 7%	Marine systems Aquaculture 7%	
Interviewees were from the following Sector Segments	24% Producers & Processors (including Māori Agribusiness)	18% Industry-good Bodies	22% Industry Support	
	7% Industry Services	17% Government Bodies	2% Out of sector	10% International industry support

The organisations were approached during September 2022, to conduct interviews during September – December 2022. Everyone who was approached agreed to be interviewed, which demonstrated the sector's support for this project. Interviews were primarily in-person, with some via Zoom. Three participants provided information via email, as their availability to attend an interview changed at short notice. The interview participants were senior members within their organisations. The conversational styled, semi-structured, interviews were conducted by the lead researchers for this project, Chris Parsons, and Dr Ellen Nelson, and typically lasted an hour.

The two key questions for each interview were (1) what leadership development currently exists and (2) what is needed for leadership development in the sector.

We took notes during the interviews, and these were generally coded later the same day of the interview. The data was analysed inductively, meaning there were no predetermined categories to assign the data. The interview notes were coded and analysed thematically, to determine the key findings. To enhance research rigour, these findings were discussed with a senior academic from Lincoln University to sense check and unpack the themes.

It is important to note that as a leadership development framework and handbook is developed in the next stage of the project, further data will be collected via focus groups, to gain further insights into the second key question: what is needed for leadership development in the sector?

These focus groups will include people at varying levels within the sector, and ensure diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, level of formal qualifications, roles across sectors and value chains.

This report has three sections. (1) a synopsis of existing leadership development, (2) key findings relating to recurring themes expressed by interviewees and (3) a developing list of principles that interviewees collectively identified. It then summarises and provides recommendations.





THE LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

LANDSCAPE

There are leadership programmes across the sector, targeted at varying leadership levels. While many of these programmes are rated highly by sector leaders, the majority of staff within the sector are not accessing leadership training, and for those that do, the leadership development pathways are often disjointed, and unclear. Further, many of the professional development programmes do not focus solely on leadership, and in some cases, leadership is only a very small component.

A table providing a brief overview of the types of leadership programmes available in the sector is provided at Annex A.

The table is not exhaustive but gives a good snapshot of the training available in the sector. For instance, it is not possible to show the multiple small consultancies located across Aotearoa New Zealand that provide leadership development and coaching. Suffice to say, they use a variety of diagnostic tools and conceptual models, and on the whole, they provide bespoke training based on individual client requests. These offerings are not integrated with any of the organisational leadership providers, such as New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust or Agri-Women's Development Trust.

Outside of the sector there are general leadership organisations, such as Icehouse, Leadership NZ, the Institute of Strategic Leadership, etc who offer a variety of programmes for different niches in the leader development field. These programmes have a variety of approaches, models, and diagnostics, suited to a general leadership market.

KEY FINDINGS

In summary, there are some valuable programmes available in the sector, but more is needed to provide linkages and pathways between them, plus further solutions are required to address gaps.

The sector sees the benefits of developing a leadership framework and has identified some important principles to be included in leadership training.

There is a strong desire to increase collaboration across the sector and to broaden the people skills, perspectives, systems and strategic thinking of its leaders.

However, the current state of leadership development is ad hoc. There are no clear pathway options for people to plan their own progression. Very few of the existing programmes build cumulatively on each other, and almost none have any education qualifications attached.

In short, there is room to improve.

2. STRUCTURAL, CONTEXTUAL, STRATEGIC.



The data from the interviews provided perspectives on what leadership means, and insight into principles of leadership that are relevant to the Food and Fibre sector. Section Three of this report presents the (developing) principles of Food and Fibre leadership. This Section presents five major recurring themes related to structure, context, and strategic perspectives, regarding leadership development.

A. PROFESSIONALISE

THE INDUSTRY

We need young people and urban people to see the primary sector as a legitimate career. This needs joined up effort between the sub-sectors of the sector.

- Horticultural leader

A number of participants talked about the need to professionalise the industry. While some noted that *“the leading farmers are far above the industry benchmarks in terms of*

sustainable practice”, there was a concern that many New Zealanders think of the Food and Fibre sector as a place for dummies.

Comments included: *“we need to improve the Agri-brand as being a profession”* and *“we need young people and urban people to see the primary sector as a legitimate career”*. Commentators were observing the increasing regulation, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) requirements and the heightened expectations of customers.

They noted that many other industries (e.g. chartered directors, master builders, etc) have had to professionalise when they were faced with similar pressures. Comments included *“we need to be able to recognise*

master growers and master farmers.”

Implications. Creating a consolidated leadership development framework would positively contribute to improving the professional image of the industry.

Young people may be more attracted to a sector where they can see career pathways, and where they can see credentialed education options.



B. STRATEGIC THINKING

AND WIDER CONTRIBUTION

Most participants talked about the need for members of the sector to think externally to their own organisation. This is both in terms of collaborating pan-sector, as well as gaining a greater and broader understanding of the world around them.

B.1. Versatility and collaboration

There are some amazing leadership opportunities – but they are very siloed. How do we stop expending undue energy in silos and get better outcomes for the Food and Fibre sector? - Dairy leader

Many participants felt that a small country such as Aotearoa New Zealand cannot afford to be as siloed as it is. One participant spoke about the need to professionalise the industry (highlighted earlier) as a challenge that could be solved with a more versatile and collaborative model: *“this needs a joined-up effort between the sub-sectors.”*

Several respondents made comments such as: *“the sector is at risk of fragmenting instead of collaborating”* and *“bridging between sub-sectors is the major opportunity – we need to be less siloed, have more collaboration and less patch protection across the sector.”*

One participant spoke about the whare tapa whā (four cornerstones) concept, to actively engage four pou (pillars): public, private, academic, and individual entrepreneurs. “It would be great if there was a way to build [a] leadership [framework] so that people could move between all these four areas without impediment.”

Another respondent talked about the opportunity for people to progress faster when they have experiences across the sector. “Latticework progression and secondments across the sector should be routine.”

Implications. A sector-wide leadership framework would contribute towards versatility and collaboration.

Versatility would be enhanced if leadership practice was taught across industries (albeit with specific industry context applied). That would allow people to move between industries and for employers to more easily recognise the level of people-skills that workers had obtained. Increased collaboration would be a result of programme participants developing high-trust cohorts with others from different regions and industries, or even within different business units in the same organisation.

B.2. Perspectives and sound judgement

Several participants highlighted that leaders need to have a broad perspective. They felt this was particularly relevant given the diversity of the people, roles, industries, stakeholder groups and values represented within the sector. One participant commented on the need to maintain an open mind to different world views if we are “to move together as one” [for instance, within a whare tapa whā model mentioned above] there are other pou (pillars) that support the big pou] such as “Te Titriti, (the Treaty of Waitangi), understanding policy, understanding the relationship between Mana Whenua [those with historic and

territorial rights over the land], rural communities, and the primary sector, the ability to walk in Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā (the Māori and European worlds) and the potential change of power dynamics from western to eastern.” Another participant spoke to the “need to understand the Wellington environment and industry politics.” Another spoke of the need to develop the versatility of left brained people to be imaginative and strategic and right brained people to be more logical and analytical. Another spoke of the “leadership challenge to manage the wide variety of members views in industry bodies (believers, non-believers, conservatives versus ambitious).”

The overall perspective from most participants was that open and educated minds are required and that the sector needed to do a better job of lifting the formal training of those within it. That said, it was fully recognised that there is a significant amount of capability built daily through informal and practical training on the job.

Implications. There is a need to progressively develop leaders’ ability to sift and sort information and to weigh different perspectives evenly as they progress through leadership transitions. Strategic leaders need to have the most sophisticated skills in this area, but even field level leaders need to be able to weigh up competing information and make sound judgements. Any leadership framework should support the development of this skillset as a means of effective decision-making.

B.3. Macro and future thinking

We need adaptive leaders who can face the big macro changes.

- Corporate farming leader

A key characteristic of the Food and Fibre sector is its export focus. 80% of all Aotearoa New Zealand produce is exported.

Therefore, the sector is very exposed to international market trends, geopolitical implications, and global supply chains. According to Lain Jager ‘New Zealand’s share of existing export Food and Fibre markets would be under threat if the country did not invest in modern food growth strategies, to keep up with international competitors.’

Multiple participants spoke of a need to lift the sector’s strategic thinking. Comments included, “strategic thinking is a critical gap - there is a gap in conceptual and design thinking”. “We have to get young leaders offshore to understand and connect with current and emerging markets and partners.”

Equally, some highlighted the fragmented nature of the sector, commenting, “we have a lot of visionaries and people who think they have the answers - which drives fragmentation”, “[we have an] absence of a unified vision for the sector” and “we need a North Star”.

Implications. There was a clear call for a more systemised approach to developing the sector’s ability to act strategically and from a NZ Inc. perspective.

A recent move in this direction is the creation of a primary sector think tank, [Te Puna Whakaaronui](#). From a leadership development lens, participants reflected a greater need for in-market experience (including postings and immersion programmes) as well as a need to equip strategic and emerging strategic leaders with critical-thinking skills and international perspectives.

C. LEADERSHIP MATTERS

There is no shortage of leadership training [in the Food and Fibre sector]. There is a gross shortage of a willingness to pay.
- Dairy leader

Leadership is good for employee engagement, and this is good for clients and profits. The core of our organisation's success is engaged employees, this leads to great outcomes for clients, leads to client stickability and drives a virtuous cycle.
- Agri-services leader

The sector needs to ensure that those coming into the leadership pool aren't left hanging, i.e. they are prepared and supported.
- Advocacy leader

With 77 observations relating specifically to this sub-topic, interviewees were very vocal on the importance of leadership and what they thought the sector challenges were.

No one challenged the importance or potential impact of leadership, but they did highlight three big issues. (1) the term leadership is a loaded term and can be off-putting. (2) there is hesitancy to stand for leadership roles. (3) employers, particularly the smaller employers, do not always see the value in leadership or leadership development.

C1. Define leadership

"Even the term leadership is misunderstood." Interviewees frequently commented on the misunderstanding of what leading, and leadership means.

Some participants were openly sceptical of the term and the industry that has developed around it. One observed that *"the meaning is different for different people. Sometimes it is just an opportunity to sell more books."*

We need to make leadership relatable." Some Kaumātua challenged that *"not everyone likes the term leader"*, they spoke of a more collective approach to Rangatira mahi (the work of leadership), specifically rooted in whanau (family) and hapu (sub-tribe).

Implications. With significant research and practical examples showing the multiplier impact of good leadership, it is important for the sector to define what it means and what it wants from leaders and leadership. This process has started in Section Three.

C2. Hesitancy around leadership

Interviewees from eleven organisations (30%) spoke of a hesitancy for people to step into leadership roles. There were three main reasons:

1). Issue with the word leadership. The issue with the term *leadership* is linked to the discussion above. Comments included, *"the word can be a barrier"*, *"leadership development needs to be accessible, because not everyone is comfortable with this term"*, *"some words have loaded meanings, but we need to get to the real essence of [leadership]"*, *"we need to build leadership understanding"* and *"we need to define what leadership is."*

2). They do not see themselves as leaders. Comments included *"Many leaders do not see themselves as a leader,"* *"we need to see others as leaders who may not fit the traditional picture."* We *"need to improve our ability to select leaders."* We need to *"show the world what is capable from the people who have no interest in going to university."* *"An encouraging word makes such an enormous difference in people's confidence to be leaders. So many people don't see themselves as leaders, and so don't apply [for roles]."*



A photograph of two women wearing light blue climbing helmets. The woman on the left is wearing a pink jacket and looking upwards with a smile. The woman on the right is wearing a black jacket and looking towards the left with a smile. The background is a blurred green and yellow, suggesting an outdoor climbing environment. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**WE NEED TO
VALUE LEADERS;
THIS INCLUDES
SUPPORTING AND
MENTORING THEM
AS THEY LEARN THE
SKILLS AND GAIN
CONFIDENCE.**

One Māori leader observed that “people not wishing to poke their head up can be due to upbringing. Māori need a new Kaupapa on this.” There was also a view that:

The biggest barrier is that older people in the sector don’t always let the young people in. Gen X and Boomers are the worst for this.

This means that young people don’t always get taken seriously, and eventually get annoyed and leave. It also means that young people don’t always feel safe or confident to step forward with their ideas, due to fear of being belittled.

Further, Gen X and Boomers have the mentality of ‘you need to wait your turn’ to be appointed to leadership positions.

We need to let young people have an opportunity to lead, and be able to make mistakes, and do so in a safe and supportive environment.

3). Leadership is not worth the grief.

Comments included there is “a big pool of potential leaders who are not putting themselves out there and are just looking out for their own businesses.” “Leadership for some is really scary, leaders can become vilified and attacked.”

There are examples of “supervisors wanting to revert to worker levels, perhaps, because they had been promoted with technical skills but not people skills and do not feel the benefits of taking on more responsibility.” “Time is a big challenge especially for those with a young family or who are running the farm.”

Implications. In addition to being clear about what we mean by, and want from leaders, there are some systemic challenges to establishing a thriving leadership culture within the Food and Fibre sector. We need to value leaders; this includes supporting and mentoring them as they learn the skills and gain confidence. While important for all leaders regardless of level, it is most important for those starting out on their leadership journey and those who do not fit the traditional stereotype of a leader.

The more these demographics can be encouraged, the more likely there will be a ripple effect that encourages others from those demographics also. A pernicious detractor is the way leaders are sometimes treated. While leaders are accountable, when current serving leaders are unfairly attacked or vilified it reduces the willingness of others to step into leadership roles for fear of personal cost to them and their families. There are two implications, (1) the importance of building leaders’ capacity for resilience, and (2) support from other leaders (sometimes termed supported growth.)

C3. What is the value in leadership development?

Research identified two schools of thought prevalent within the sector. Some members of the sector are sceptical about the value of leadership development. Others see significant value.

1). Some do not see the value in leadership training. Participants noted a variety of reasons for this. One reason was the relevance of the current approach; “the current qualifications were designed by looking at the funder not the industry. [Consequently] When we look at the lower levels, there is a lower willingness to pay for leadership training.” Some noted that “travel and training are always the first to be cut when there’s budget pressures.” Others noted that some members of the sector do not value leadership development, “because they don’t know what they don’t know.” And still others observed that some growers “see people as a budget line cost. Instead, they need to realise that money is lost with poorly trained people (breakages, poor quality assurance, lost fruit, staff turnover, etc).”

2). Some see significant value in leadership development. It was noticeable that the bigger firms and the more successful firms valued leadership development highly. One larger organisation told us they “place a lot of emphasis on leadership. People need to be leading in innovation to see the strategy achieved, and for

us to be an employer of choice. We are lucky to have a CEO who is about people. We have developed a programme for our up-and-coming leaders. The programme is led, resourced, and prioritised from the top. As a result, a lot of our roles are recruited internally.” Other participants said that “people skills assist with staff retention.” and that “when the foreman is given leadership skills to; step back and delegate, provide foresight, have consequential discussions, separate of popularity with responsibility. Then good behaviours flow.”

Implications. Not all parts of the Food and Fibre sector will immediately wish to, or be able to embark on leadership development. But if some large and medium cornerstone organisations can assist in showing the way and working collaboratively across the sector, there is a reasonable chance that the results will speak for themselves and over time, leadership development will become a more accepted means of lifting prosperity (in its broader sense).

The sector would also benefit from existing leadership and development organisations working together to develop coherent pathways and programmes. Moves in this direction would better cater for the whole Sector including the large number of small to medium enterprises who do not have the capacity for their own in-house development.

D. LEVEL AND TYPE OF

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

REQUIRED

We have some amazing leaders [in the sector], we just don't have enough of them.

- Dairy leader

Participants identified gaps at every level in the leadership strata. Different commentators have different perspectives on which level was more lacking and which were more important: but taken together every layer was represented.

The other general point to make is that there was a view that focusing early efforts on young people would have the best long-term effects, because they will be longer in the workforce. That said, there is also a risk in this approach.

If young people move into the workforce with developed junior leadership skills and high expectations, but their supervisors have not been developed and these expectations are not met, then the sector risks an outflux of disenchanted young people.

Therefore, while there are sound arguments to focus on young people, it cannot be done in isolation of a systems approach. Further, it is important that an intent to start leadership training early does not then exclude or discriminate against later joiners.

BUSINESSES WITH ENGAGED WORKERS HAVE

23%

HIGHER PROFIT COMPARED TO THOSE WITH DISENAGED WORKERS.*

*GALLUP GLOBAL
WORKFORCE SURVEY, 2022.



D1. Levels of leadership needed

Interviewees identified six levels of leadership that need development.

Table 2: Levels of Leadership			
Level	Description	Characteristics	Context
1	Lead Self	E.g., Team Member, Self Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team and task context - Tactical horizon - 180° Influence (up and across) - Follows, learns, and contributes
2	Team Leader	E.g., Farm 2IC, Frontline Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional context - Direct leadership of a nuclear team - 360° Influence (up, across, down) - Operational horizon - Understudies' operations leader level - Works constructively with other team leaders and external networks (e.g. contractors)
3	Operational Leader	E.g., Operations Officer, Farm Manager, Orchard Manager, Fishing Captain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value chain and operating system context - 360° Influence - Operations horizon - Understudies GM level - Accountable for influencing team leaders and external stakeholders
4	General Management	E.g., Divisional Leader, Emerging Strategic Leader, Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enterprise and pan-sector context - Strategic horizon - 360° Influence and supports governance - Understudies executive level
5	Executive Leader	E.g., C-Suite Executive, Enterprise Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External context (Pan-sector, NZ Inc. international) - Strategic horizon - 360° Influence (including governance and external stakeholders) - Accountable for enterprise success and stewardship of people and resources
6	Governance	E.g., Director, Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External context - Strategic horizon - 360° Influence (without encroaching into the management sphere) - Accountable for major decisions (including strategy, risk, solvency and ESG⁶). - Accountable to shareholders



⁶ESG is a framework that helps stakeholders, including customers and investors, to understand how an organisation is embracing environmental, social and governance factors (principles and standards).



D2. Context and functional development needed

Interviewees noted that, besides the levels of leadership, there were different audiences and functional areas that needed development. For instance, there is a “*need for individual leader development as well as team development (teams of leaders).*”

The team environment is important, because if individual leaders are developed and then thrown back into poor organisational environments, they are less likely to thrive and more likely to leave.

There was also a view that targeted development was important to build a strong and diverse talent pipeline that ensures people are not left behind and that the sector could adapt to changing demographics and build cultural competence. For instance, by 2043 50% of the Food and Fibre workforce is projected to be Māori, Pacifica and Asian.

Table 3 is an illustrative concept for what leaders and leadership functions need to be developed. It is not exhaustive.

Table 3: Leadership audiences and functional applications

Illustrative leadership domains	Audiences			Functional Application (illustrative examples)			
	Individual		Collective	Lead governance	Entrepreneurial leadership	Community leadership	Lead advocacy
	General	Underserved communities (e.g., Māori, women, youth, migrants)	Teams				
Core leadership challenge	Personal leadership capability and confidence (Moving through leadership levels)		Working together	Effective decision-making	Willingness to pursue purposeful risk-taking ⁷	Motivate and focus volunteers	Represent others and challenge constructively

Interviewees also discussed the need for an approach that allowed for vertical, horizontal, and deep progression, not just vertical progression.

Implications. The sector needs to adapt to changing demographics and build-up its cultural competence.

Also, given the size of the sector and the different life choices and imperatives of people within the sector, it was considered that people should be given the broadest possible range of options for how they wish their career and leadership journey to progress.

Some will wish to progress as specialists (e.g. as technical or thought leaders) where as others might find fulfilment in leadership roles where they develop operational excellence, and still others might aspire to general leadership roles where they lead an enterprise.



⁷Lumpkin, G.T. and Dess, G.G. (1996) Clarifying the Entrepreneurial Orientation Construct and Linking It to Performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 135-172. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1996.9602161568>

E. AN ECO-SYSTEM

OF LEADER AND LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT

E1. Leadership framework and pathways are needed

Who gets leadership development in the sector is luck of the draw. It is very ad hoc.

- Corporate farming leader

We have seen the power of progression pathways in Dairy.

- Māori agri-business leader

Developing skills in people is a process, not an event.

- Industry-good leader

Participants universally discussed the lack of a systemised approach to leader development. Comments included “its luck of the draw”, “there is no structure”, “programmes across the sector are not joined up.”

Several interviewees noted that “there is a plethora of orphan programmes that die-off without champions.” “The same stuff is getting done again and again, with no progression pathway.”

In the next breath, multiple participants noted the advantages they had observed when there was a systemised approach to leader and leadership development.

Comments included “Leadership training as a retention tool for young members of the horticultural sector: professional development motivates them to stay,” “the programme [run by our cooperative] was good, because there was a clear framework. We don’t want to pigeonhole people, but we also need to have a framework.”

There were a couple of valuable comments about the need to leave room for personal choice rather than have a system that locked people in too rigidly. “We should encourage people to be aware of what is there. But it’s not necessarily a good idea to have a clearly identified linear pathway because that can create group think, etc.”

Implications. Participants comments are very strongly correlated with the view that the sector suffers from not having a clearly identifiable model for leadership progression. However, there was also a view that this cannot be too linear or rigid.

One Kuia (female elder) spoke of how “Māori think holistically” the implication is that any leader development framework would be better designed as an eco-system that is both strategically connected but also provides freedom for individuals to exercise choice over their own path. In this context a development eco-system might look like a network of interconnecting roads that allow people choice in how and when they arrive at their destination and what means of travel they take on their leadership journey.

E2. A Blended approach, including practical development is needed

In today’s world, knowledge is not the differentiator, it is experiences.

- Fisheries leader

The sector is practically orientated and therefore it is likely that it has higher than average numbers of kinaesthetic learners (kinaesthetic learning links the process of learning to physical activity).

To be clear, this does not just apply to frontline workers. One scientist with CEO responsibilities told us “There is a cohort of people that are not served by the traditional approaches (post-it notes, role playing, lectures). Put me in an environment where I can watch or do something, and I learn best.” Some commentators highlighted the difficulty of taking people off the job-site to do development. One leader said, “there needs to be a smarter way of delivering leadership material: on job, but offline.”

Implications. A development approach needs to consider how to access learners who cannot easily take time away from the workplace (not least because of the need to provide animal care) and whose remote locations might also mean that online connectivity is not dependable, or it is not their preferred way of learning.

This does not mean that classroom-based learning located in major centres is not valid, just that it is not valid for all elements of delivery. A mix of shorter face-to-face programmes that include kinaesthetic learning opportunities and leverage coaching and on-the-job experience, will also be an important part of the mix required.

E3. Mentoring and coaching is useful

Having mentors helps with resilience and confidence.

- Arable leader

Participants spoke of the value of mentoring and coaching. Mentoring is when a more senior or experienced person provides the mentee the benefit of that experience. Mentors suggest and advise. Coaches use listening and questioning to unlock the potential in an individual to help them maximise their performance. Some commentators put their success down to coaching and mentoring. One senior leader approached people and assembled her own mentoring group, “no one said no.” She now mentors others. Others said, “it is super helpful for people to have mentors outside their chain of command.” This is so that they feel free to be honest without potentially compromising their work-standing.

Others noted the potential of reverse mentoring (where a less experienced person provides alternate perspectives to a more experienced person) “When it comes to supported growth, it’s not just programmes. It is the alumni, networks, social media communication and mentoring that provide the eco-system that magnifies and organically supports growth and builds a leadership movement.”

Implications. Mentoring and coaching encourage people in the application of the personal and professional growth achieved on formal programmes. They have a role in deepening and accelerating learning in the workplace and home life and in supporting leaders’ resilience and confidence. Leaders can approach more than one mentor. Many senior leaders are happy to provide pro bono mentoring to give back.

All leader development programmes (above ‘lead self’) should include coaching techniques to help leaders unleash the potential in their teams. Specialised coaching is different and is best provided by trained coaches who have a code of conduct. Specialised coaching should be embodied within a Food and Fibre leadership eco-system, but it will require resourcing.

E4. Exemplars are helpful for illustrating good leadership

Often inter-generational farmers only role model was their predecessor. We need more examples for them to observe and learn from.

- Corporate farming leader

We need to highlight exemplars that demonstrate the commercial value of good leadership.

- Education leader

Farmers trust farmers. Several interviewees spoke to the importance of highlighting stories where leadership and team performance has had tangible benefits to an enterprise. Comments included “we need practical examples that people can attach themselves to: practical examples applied to pasture and people.” Another said, “storytelling is great for demonstrating examples.”

Implications. The implication here is simple, a Food and Fibre leadership handbook needs to include practical stories that bring the leadership principles and behaviours to life in a tangible way. Development programmes are also likely to benefit from real life stories and hearing from leaders who have dealt with tough times, speaking about their journey.

E5. Need for qualifications? Capture value do not just create it.

It is about designing credentials to be versatile.

- Education leader

The topic of credentials provokes several different responses. Most of those interviewed were strongly in favour of underpinning leadership development programmes with recognised credentials where appropriate. One commentator spoke of the need to “ensure there is transferability of leadership training across sectors” and that “recognised qualifications would help enable this.”

Another interviewee noted the increasing importance of environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks for impact investors and conscientious investors. Measuring qualifications achievement could be beneficial or even essential to values-driven investors as a means of demonstrating their social responsibility. Some participants noted that the current qualification system can be too process orientated and optimised for the education system, not for industry.

We put this to the New Zealand Qualifications authority and had a useful briefing on the imminent changes. Their future design aims to ensure differentiation, portability of skills, recognition of qualifications, flexibility, stackable qualifications, learner equity, more work-based learning, and enabling learner confidence. It is intended that there are three levels of qualifications: (1) skills standards that can be stacked to build micro-credentials, (2) micro-credentials, and (3) full qualifications. We were advised that “People, Food and Fibre Workforce Development Council (Muka Tangata) would be the glue that managed the system [for Food and Fibre].”

Implications. A future leadership development eco-system will be better and more sustainable if it can include qualifications and credentials. Skills Consulting Group have been requested to propose an approach that would ensure a new leadership development eco-system is integrated with Aotearoa New Zealand qualifications and standards.

E6. Who to deliver the programmes?

The Aotearoa New Zealand Food and Fibre sector comprises small, medium, and large organisations. The large organisations, including Fonterra, often have their own in-house leader development, which is well resourced, structured, and supported. Notwithstanding, it is useful for selected operational and strategic leaders to do external development too, as a means of beachcombing new ideas and building wider networks.

The plethora of small organisations, including many family-owned producer and harvesting operations do not have the scale to create in-house programmes. The mid-sized organisations are a blend of both ends of the spectrum. In some instances, they have the scale and specific context to run in-house leader development for their field and operational leaders: but they need to leverage external providers for development of their more senior leaders and leadership teams.

Implications. If the Food and Fibre sector is to become synonymous with a thriving leadership culture, then the eco-system that underpins it should cater for the spectrum of organisations (small, medium, and large). To do this is to establish development programmes and coaching that are delivered by: (1) a leadership centre – that professionalises delivery and keeps the sector at the forefront of leadership thinking, research, and design. (2) the provision of content that can be delivered in-house by individual organisations. This has the advantage that they can apply their context and branding over the top of the content and also reduce the time away from work or community.

E7. Cohorts and networks are key

It is the connections you make and the trust that is formed that provides the value.

- Executive development leader

There is good evidence to show that programmes and experiences that develop cohorts create enduring value. It has been shown that high-trust cohorts are a factor in lifting entrepreneurialism by The Mackenzie Study. This study was recently completed by New Zealand Rural Leaders, Otago University, and the Mackenzie Charitable Foundation. It was a longitudinal survey covering 70 years of Nuffield Scholars and 41 years of Kellogg Scholars.

Cohorts are valuable because they allow ideas to be tested with others of known capability and in confidence. One membership organisation has noticed this effect with their programme *“the Wellington Experience has developed awareness and cohorts of women influencers.”* Other interviewees also noted *“cohorts for training are super useful.”* Cohorts can create a sense of belonging, which is hugely beneficial to peoples’ performance and wellness.

Implications. There is value in bringing people together and providing a unifying experience that serves to build connection, team identity and trust. This is beneficial at multiple levels, with work teams, and leadership teams within an organisation, or with leaders and emerging leaders from across regions, organisations, roles (e.g. practitioners and policymakers) and world views (e.g. Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā).



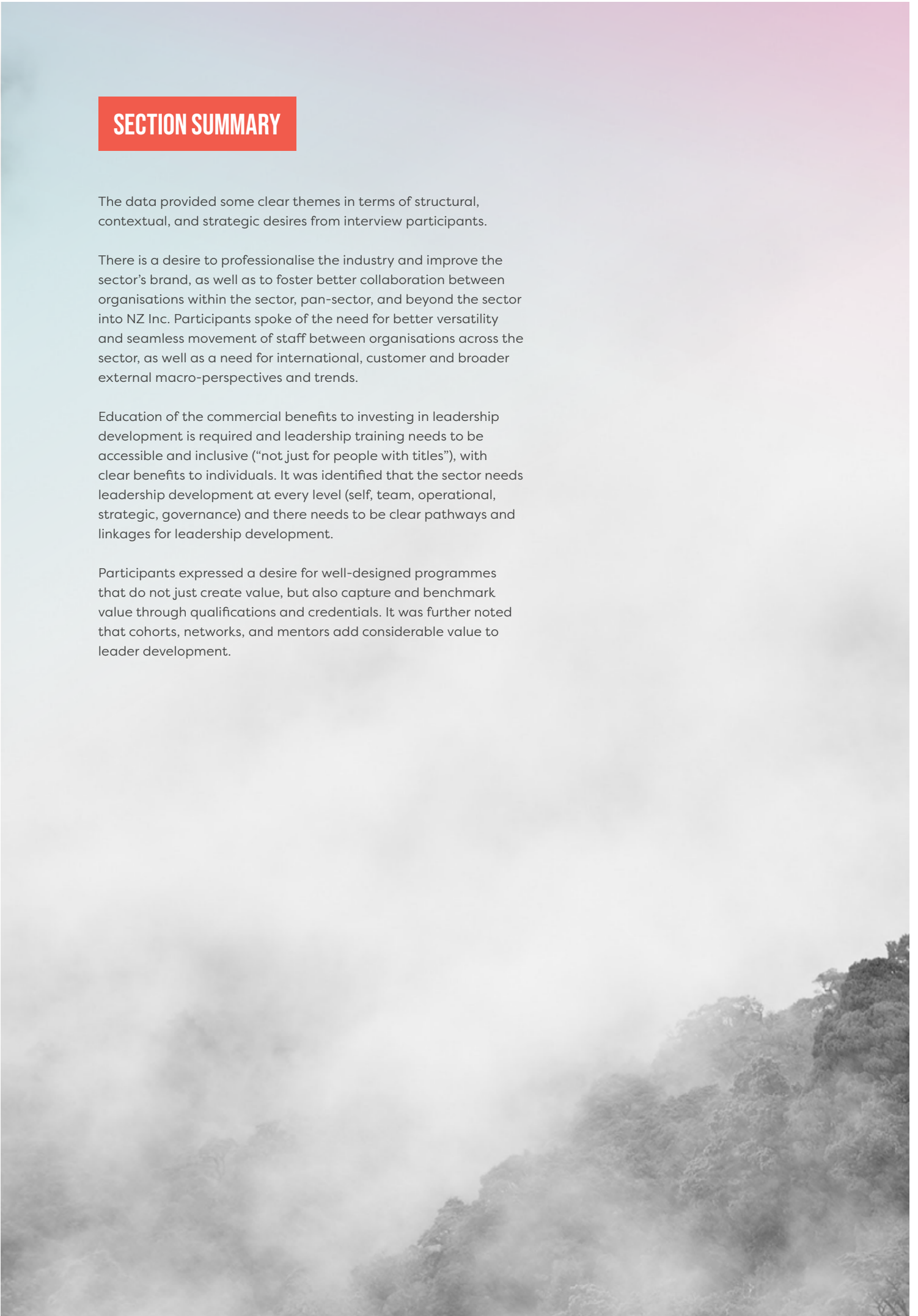
SECTION SUMMARY

The data provided some clear themes in terms of structural, contextual, and strategic desires from interview participants.

There is a desire to professionalise the industry and improve the sector's brand, as well as to foster better collaboration between organisations within the sector, pan-sector, and beyond the sector into NZ Inc. Participants spoke of the need for better versatility and seamless movement of staff between organisations across the sector, as well as a need for international, customer and broader external macro-perspectives and trends.

Education of the commercial benefits to investing in leadership development is required and leadership training needs to be accessible and inclusive ("not just for people with titles"), with clear benefits to individuals. It was identified that the sector needs leadership development at every level (self, team, operational, strategic, governance) and there needs to be clear pathways and linkages for leadership development.

Participants expressed a desire for well-designed programmes that do not just create value, but also capture and benchmark value through qualifications and credentials. It was further noted that cohorts, networks, and mentors add considerable value to leader development.



3. LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the structural and contextual observations discussed above, interviewees made 202 high-level observations.

These observations have been analysed thematically and summarised into principles and characteristics. Each principle and its related characteristics are précised in Table 4 on the following page.

**Table 4:
Leadership
principles and
characteristics**

Serial	Principle	Characteristics
1	Leadership of others is a privilege not a right	1.1. Leading (the act of influencing) and leadership (the state or position of being a leader) are similar but distinct 1.2. Those in leadership need to be selected, equipped, and supported 1.3. Have humble confidence
2	Food and Fibre leaders are grounded	2.1. Practical. Realistic, humbled, straight shooters 2.2. Environmental. Maintain a reciprocal relationship with Taiao (the natural world) 2.3. Cultural. Embrace Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural foundation within a modern and multicultural context 2.4. Social. Community-minded, pitch in and give others a hand
3	Leaders build relationships	3.1. People first 3.2. Influence, don't rule
4	Leadership is about teamwork	4.1. Set the team culture 4.2. Connect people to purpose ⁸ and define meaning (including through storytelling) 4.3. Harness the horsepower of diversity 4.4. Foster belonging 4.5. Connect, don't just communicate
5	Those in leadership take accountability while delegating responsibility and authority	5.1. It is about accountability, not importance 5.2. Enable timely and effective decision-making 5.3. Leadership comes with scars
6	Leaders unleash the potential in others	6.1. Do not horde power, unleash it 6.2. Build confidence in others 6.3. Provide mission leadership 6.4. Be uncomfortable: failure is a stepping-stone, not an anchor-stone 6.5. Build resilience

These principles can be viewed as a pyramid where the foundational principles are at the base, the core disciplines of leadership are in the centre and the role and responsibilities of those in leadership are at the apex.

The diagram seeks to make the difficult distinction between the act of leading, i.e. influencing others, and the broader requirements of leadership.



Figure 2. Principles pyramid.



⁸[A leader's] unique achievement is a human and social one which stems from [their] understanding of [their] fellow workers and the relationship of their individual goals to the group goal that [the leader] must carry out. W.C.H. Prentice as cited in the Harvard Business Review, January 2004, <https://hbr.org/2004/01/understanding-leadership>

**BY 2043 50% OF
THE FOOD AND FIBRE
WORKFORCE IS PROJECTED
TO BE MĀORI, PACIFICA
AND ASIAN.***

***DAIRYNZ, MINISTRY FOR
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, GREAT
FUTURES IN DAIRYING:
2022-2032, (2022), P. 10.**



A photograph of a man in a brown cap and dark jacket, smiling and looking to the right. He is sitting at a table with a white cup and saucer. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

**P1. LEADING
OTHERS IS A
PRIVILEGE.**

“Often inter-generational farmers only role model was their predecessor. We need more examples for them to observe and learn from.”

- Corporate farming leader

“We need to highlight exemplars that demonstrate the commercial value of good leadership.”

- Education leader

P1.1 LEADING VERSUS

LEADERSHIP

To *lead* is an act, a *leader* is a person and *leadership* is a position or system.

The conventional wisdom is that *everyone can lead*. We do not contest this statement, however what we heard from several interviewees, including from several eminent Kaumātua (Māori elders) was that not everyone is suited to the responsibilities bestowed on those in leadership roles. This is a nuanced point but an important one.

The point can be initially difficult to grasp because we use *lead*, *leader*, and *leadership* interchangeably. Indeed, this is the case throughout this report also. To do otherwise would become cumbersome for the reader or to everyday conversation. Nevertheless, it is important to make the distinction here.

At its most basic, the term *lead* is a verb that describes the act of influencing. *Leadership* is a noun that describes the position, office, and attributes of a leader. The Collins Dictionary defines a *leader* as the person who is in control ... or in charge of [a group of people or an organisation].⁹ The point is that to influence others (lead) does not require a position or authority, it is simply the communication of an idea or an example-setting behaviour that others see the value of and then adopt.

The most successful teams embrace *leading* in this context: and it happens at multiple levels and times every day. Individuals are more likely to be influential if they understand the environmental and operating context, have a good relationship with other team members and, ideally, with those in leadership.

On the other hand, while *leadership* involves leading, it also embodies several other responsibilities. These include weaving a team together (rangatira mahi), taking accountability for that team while also being prepared to share responsibility and authority with them, so that the individual and collective potential of the team members and the team are unleashed. This is not simply to achieve the team's objectives, although that is the core utility of leadership. The true impact of good leadership is the creation of an environment that allows the latent potential in others to be unlocked.

P1.2. SELECT, EQUIP

AND SUPPORT

Interviewees noted that the sector needs to improve its ability to select leaders. They said that leadership is not a right. People are not good leaders just because they are the loudest, the wealthiest, from an old family, have gone to a good school or university or even because they have great technical skills or a long history in an organisation.

Good leadership is a multiplier, and its impact can only be fully observed in retrospect. The leader should prepare the team to operate in their absence. To train this requires leaders to progressively create space for the team and individuals within it to take the initiative and to grow.

Ultimately *leadership* is a privilege that, in its truest form, is bestowed on the leader by those who entrust their lives and livelihoods to them.

Therefore, there is also a distinction between a boss and a leader.

While every boss holds a leadership office or position, 'bossing' is different from *leading*. Bosses direct, whereas leaders inspire.

P1.3. HUMBLE

CONFIDENCE

The impact of leadership is evident across the sector. In the best cases, lives and livelihoods thrive. In the worst cases, lives and livelihoods do not survive. Sector statistics on workforce churn, stress, burnout, suicide, and injury tell a story of underperforming leadership.

Because of the privileged position leaders hold and the degree to which they can impact the lives and livelihoods of others, they must know themselves and govern their own behaviour.

In short, to be fully effective, Food and Fibre leaders need to put the work into themselves as well as their organisational objectives. Given the nature of the sector, they need to find within themselves that paradoxical mix of humble confidence that allows them the confidence to challenge the status quo and yet the humility to remain grounded and open to the ongoing task of self-understanding and improvement.



⁹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/leader>



P2. GROUNDED.

“There is a feeling that rural community and communal values have been lost in the sector over time.”

- Dairy leader

“It is not just one rangatira it is a whanau or a hapu of rangatira.”

- Māori agri-business leader

In principle all leaders, regardless of sector, should be grounded (genuine, connected, and attuned to the environment they work in and the people they serve). But this is particularly relevant for the Food and Fibre sector. There are four facets to the Food and Fibre concept of grounded leaders.

P2.1 PRACTICAL

At a practical level, the type of people who make up an essential part of the sector, are of the earth and the oceans. They are deeply practical, often independent, and resilient. They expect leaders to be humble, straightforward, pragmatic, and competent.

P2.2 NATURALLY

GROUNDED

Food and Fibre leaders need to understand and preserve the reciprocal relationship with Taiao (the natural world). Not least because the sector operates at the intersection of nature, human sustainment, and economic systems. Respect for the natural world is not just important to the sector, it is the central pillar upon which everything else is built. Consequently, farming families and especially Māori are deeply connected to the land: it is their home, work, and identity all in one.

In a Te Ao Māori context, people belong to the land, not the other way around. Food and Fibre leaders are grounded in the concept of Kaitiakitanga (guardianship). They exercise a deep-rooted responsibility to the natural world, and the generations who will follow them.

P2.3 CULTURALLY

ATTUNED

The workforce demographics of Aotearoa New Zealand are changing. By 2043 Māori, Pacifica, and Asians will make up 50% of the working population (compared to 37% in 2018).¹⁰ At the same time Kiwi culture and language are rebalancing to better embrace Māori and more fully understand and express the depth of our joint story.

Internationally, Māori agribusiness is becoming better known and is establishing a market share based on excellence and authenticity. As this evolution occurs, there is an opportunity and an imperative for sector leaders, old and new, to better understand the partnership arrangements and equality, under the Crown, agreed by signatories of both peoples in 1840.

To date, if we are honest, most Food and Fibre leaders have been largely blind to the richness of Te Ao Māori values and perspectives. This is not sufficient now and will certainly not be sufficient in 2043 (20 short years away).

A future characteristic of successful Food and Fibre leaders will be that they are attuned to the values and perspectives of the Māori worldview (Te Ao Māori). In saying this, we were told that *“Te Ao Māori cannot be defined by the other – a Western view. It must be understood in its own right.”*

Kaumātua told us that *“change happens from the inside out, not the outside in.”* This means, each person aspiring to or holding leadership responsibilities will need to take their own journey of discovery if they are to be grounded in Te Ao Māori concepts sufficiently to lead in an authentically Kiwi way now and into the future.

P2.4 COMMUNITY-

MINDED

13% of New Zealand’s workforce work in the Food and Fibre sector. They are sparsely distributed across 50+% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s land mass and harvest fish from an exclusive economic zone that is equivalent to 430 million hectares.

Community and cooperative spirit is important, because the work is tough and there are often few others to call on. Effective Food and Fibre leaders know this and are willing to pitch in and give others a hand. They volunteer for community efforts.

Leaders work to bridge the physical isolation of the sector through connected communities.



¹⁰ DairyNZ & Ministry for Primary Industries, (2022), GREAT FUTURES IN DAIRYING Our plan for a resilient workforce 2022–2032, (p. 10), https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/5795487/dnz_great_futures_in_dairying_a4-booklet_web_june2022.pdf



**P3. LEADERS
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.**

*“It’s the connections
you make and the
trust that is formed
that brings the value.”*

- Executive development
leader

P3.1 PEOPLE FIRST

Interviewees frequently noted that people are at the heart of leadership and that the sector needs to emphasise and equip leaders with people skills, not just technical skills.¹¹ Leaders are most influential when people are moved emotionally, not just logically.

A key leadership characteristic is an ability to bring people together. This is embodied in the Māori word for leader, Rangatira, which comes from two words, *ranga* and *tira*. Ranga is the root word of raranga which means to weave and tira means the group.¹² To that end, it was noted that leaders build bridges with others and that this skill is increasingly important in a complex environment where solutions require the collective efforts of a diverse range of people.

P3.2 INFLUENCE,

DON'T RULE

One interviewee noted, “*from the women we’ve worked with, leadership is about behaviour not about a position.*” How leaders show up builds or destroys trust. Interviewees repeatedly noted that trust is an essential ingredient in healthy and constructive relationships. To that end, participants saw the ability to engender trust as a crucial leader characteristic.

Demonstrating a genuine care and empathy for those you lead was also frequently cited as a core attribute (empathy is the ability to see someone else’s perspective – it significantly improves a person’s ability for influence).

This runs counter to some of the culture within the Food and Fibre sector, where empathy is seen as soft and where toughness and not overtly showing feelings is seen as strength.

This cultural setting needs to be challenged according to several participants: not least because, “leaders have a duty of care”. But also, because there is significant research on the importance of leaders creating a relational environment that provides psychological safety.

When people feel psychologically safe, they are more engaged. Gallup research has found that engaged teams are 23% more profitable than disengaged teams.¹³ Spiller, Barclay-Kerr and Panoho’s *wayfinding leadership model* puts it this way: ‘to step into true rangatira space is to work with others from a place of deep humility, leading with others to allow all to succeed. This is achieved by leading in a mana-enhancing way by paying attention to relationships, reciprocity, and mutual recognition’.¹⁴

One respondent put it this way “*people need to be safe, seen, and stretched.*”

¹¹Human beings are not machines with a single set of push buttons. When their complex responses to love, prestige, independence, achievement, and group membership are unrecognized on the job, they perform at best as automata who bring far less than their maximum efficiency to the task, and at worst as rebellious slaves who consciously or unconsciously sabotage the activities they are supposed to be furthering. <https://hbr.org/2004/01/understanding-leadership>

¹²Henry, E., & Wolfram, R., (2018) Relational leadership – An indigenous Māori perspective, *Leadership*, Volume 14, Issue 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015616282>

¹³Gallup, (2022), *State of the Global Workplace 2022 Report THE VOICE OF THE WORLD'S EMPLOYEES*, (pp. 4, 6 & 99) <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace-2022-report.aspx>

¹⁴Carlson, L., (2020, May, 28), ‘With’ leadership in a changing landscape, [Blog], University of Waikato, <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/professionallearning/blog/with-leadership-in-a-changing-landscape>





P4. LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT TEAMWORK.

“It’s about a mission culture, not a permission culture.”

- A leader in the sheep and beef industry

A key principle of leadership is teamwork. Often this involves turning a group of people into a team.

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, goals, and approach for which they hold each other mutually accountable. A team is different from a group.

A group is a party of individuals whose outputs rely on the sum of individual bests.¹⁵

P4.1 SET THE TEAM

CULTURE

Leadership approach and team culture are inextricably linked. The leader is the most watched member of any team. What a leader says and does has a disproportionate impact on others in the team, because leaders typically have more power, (sometimes) more experience, and access to more information.

Promotion in any team usually is a result of consistently impressing the leader. Therefore, it follows that leaders have the largest influence on the culture of a group or team. Not least because their approach will be copied by their subordinate leaders – this is called the *leadership ripple effect*.

For example, if a leader operates with an autocratic style, they will potentially reduce short-term risks and gain efficiencies, particularly in a crisis, but they will also suppress initiative and growth. Over time this breeds a permission culture instead of a mission culture.

P4.2 CONNECT

PEOPLE AND

PURPOSE

Don't assume people know the purpose. Keep reiterating it.

- Horticultural leader

It's about storytelling. Not just the big stories. It's the deeply personal stories.

- A sheep and beef leader

History is full of examples of people willingly doing awful tasks if they believe in the purpose, enjoy the team environment, and know that people have their back. One participant said that *"much of the art... is creating a team environment where the purpose is clearly articulated. This is most powerfully felt when purpose is wrapped in stories that personify the ideals and identity of the team and its purpose."*

Stories become nga kete (the baskets) that hold the team culture. Participants also noted that leaders should seek to establish a culture that *"invites the leader and team members to hold each other mutually accountable within a psychologically safe environment."*

P4.3 HARNESS THE

HORSEPOWER

OF DIVERSITY

Much of the horsepower within a team comes from diversity. Diversity includes those different skillsets, mindsets, experiences, and demographic differences that, when woven together (inclusion) give the team real grunt. Beyond selecting for diversity, the real work of the leader is to do the rangatira mahi and weave people together to create a climate of belonging.

P4.4 BUILD

BELONGING

To be fully effective, creative and to lead within the team, people must feel like they belong (are included) within the team. In high-performing teams this goes beyond just their 'work mask.'

Leaders in those teams encourage authenticity, they leave space for their teammates to bring their whole selves to the team. This allows the fullest expression of their talents to be focused on the team's purpose.

When this dynamic is in full flow the team transforms from one leader and multiple followers to a team of leaders working together and led by purpose.

P4.5 CONNECT

DON'T JUST

COMMUNICATE

Communications came up time and again in almost every interview, as a critical leadership capability. Whereas trust is the glue that binds a team together, teams share understanding through communications.

Communications allow people to connect and build relationships; they are how leaders inspire and mobilise others. Equally, miscommunications are the greatest cause of team friction. Rural Leaders research data of over 134 leaders in the Food and Fibre sector shows that Food and Fibre leaders, as a demographic, have a pronounced tendency towards being *candid*.

"As a strength, candid individuals tend to be direct and to the point when dealing with others. They prefer to not beat around the bush and are unlikely to be easily swayed by displays of emotion or worry about others' feelings. The limitations of being candid are that although they can cope with tough situations, they [can] come across as uncaring and too blunt..."¹⁵

If the Food and Fibre sector is to excel at building and maintaining collegial relationships and productive organisations, then how we connect and communicate is a crucial area of focus. As well as being important for cohesion within organisations and within the sector, this can be even more important when dealing with people from other sectors who have a different approach and may be less candid.



¹⁵Katzenbach, J. R. and Smith, D.K. (1993), *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-performance Organisation*, Harvard Business School, Boston.
¹⁶Deeper Signals, (2023, January, 04), *Core Drivers FAQs Understanding Core Drivers*, <https://www.deepersignals.com/core-driver-faqs>

“Leaders should delegate responsibility and authority, but a leader’s accountability is indivisible.”

- A leader in the sheep and beef industry

**P5. LEADERS
ARE ALWAYS
ACCOUNTABLE.**



Those in leadership roles are accountable for the success of the team and their organisation. 'Good leaders are honest and transparent in their decisions and how they [steward their people] and utilise the resources at their disposal.'¹⁷

P5.1 IT'S ABOUT

ACCOUNTABILITY

NOT IMPORTANT

The mantle of leadership comes with power. The *robes of office* mean that people often look to the person placed in leadership for guidance, authority to act and for approval. This can be intoxicating. The temptation is to centralise power and for the leader to start believing that they are somehow more important than those they lead. The opposite is true, the leader is more accountable, not more important.

A leader's accountability is indivisible: it cannot be divided, distributed, or delegated. The buck stops with the person in leadership. However, the best leaders do delegate their authority and give responsibility to the lowest appropriate level.

Research shows that in addition to setting a clear purpose and creating a sense of belonging, team members are more likely to be highly engaged when they gain mastery in an area and then have the autonomy (authority) to operate within their capabilities.¹⁸

How those in leadership manage the interplay between building-up the capability of their team (promoting mastery) and then empowering team members closest to the action to make relevant decisions (autonomy), are all predictors of success.

P5.2 ENABLE TIMELY

AND EFFECTIVE

DECISION-MAKING

Collective decision-making enables and translates our mana motuhake [self-determination and control over one's own destiny] with external actors.

- Māori agri-business leader

It is sometimes said that the difference between a good farmer and an average farmer is two weeks. We heard that "One of the biggest decisions leaders make is how to utilise their time." In short, good and timely decision-making is vital to success.

Because accountability lies with the leader, it follows that Food and Fibre leaders should be skilled decision-makers. They need to understand when to use intuitive decision-making and when to use analytical techniques. They should also be conscious of their biases and be able to critically analyse and weigh the value of information from a diverse set of inputs.

In an era where leaders are subject to 'info-whelm', sifting information and weighing its value is more important than ever.

Leaders dealing with complex or novel issues need to be comfortable dealing with incomplete information and making judgement calls.

Like lots of small course corrections when four-wheel driving, taking a series of small decisions early can be less risky in dynamic and complex situations than making a few big bets that risk the farm. Equally, in large teams or quickly moving environments, it is not possible to control everything.

Successful leaders develop the art of delegation. However, encouraging autonomy does not imply laissez-faire leadership or team anarchy. Autonomy in this setting is akin to *mission leadership* where team members have freedom of action, within the context of the leader's overarching intent and the organisation's purpose: freedom within a framework. (see P.6.3).



¹⁷United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010), Handbook for prison leaders, United Nations, (p 40), https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UNODC_Handbook_for_Prison_Leaders.pdf

¹⁸Pink, D., (2011), Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, Riverhead Books

P5.3 LEADERSHIP COMES WITH SCARS

Leadership and popularity are not the same things.

- Māori agri-business leader

Leadership comes with scars. This is in-part because leaders seek to change rather than optimise the status quo. This requires leaders to challenge long-held ways of doing things: people will doubt them or disagree with them. By virtue of doing something new, leaders will get things wrong: people will critique their (so-called) failures. Even when leaders finally succeed, there is an all too human reaction to cut the tall poppies down.


All these factors mean that leadership can be lonely, full of self-doubt and hard-work. But the scars of endeavour should be badges of pride. The satisfaction of contributing to something bigger than yourself is its own reward.

If the Food and Fibre sector is to have a thriving leadership culture, it needs individual leaders with the courage of their convictions, but it also needs seasoned leaders to accept their special role in encouraging, coaching, and mentoring less experienced leaders.

The gift of encouragement and belief can have an exponential effect on those still wayfinding in their leadership journey.



**THE GIFT OF
ENCOURAGEMENT
AND BELIEF CAN HAVE
AN EXPONENTIAL
EFFECT ON THOSE STILL
WAYFINDING IN THEIR
LEADERSHIP JOURNEY.**

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a blue top, is looking intently at a document she is holding. She has a tattoo on her chin. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

We gain mana by growing it in others, by awakening and releasing potential in those around us.

- Professor Charles Royal¹⁹

**P6. UNLEASH
THE POTENTIAL
IN OTHERS.**

Good leaders allow everyone to be better around them. But they must give something of themselves.

- Education leader

P6.1 WHEN YOU

GIVE POWER AWAY

IT BECOMES INFINITE

We repeatedly heard that the best leaders in the Food and Fibre sector are those that promote the conditions for others to be their best. One participant told us that “power is not finite; when you give it away it becomes infinite.”

We heard that egotism and fear were twin causes of non-productive leadership behaviours that suppressed potential. We were told that this is counter-productive given the range and speed of issues facing the Food and Fibre sector. As a sector we need as many people working and leading to their potential as possible.

P6.2 BUILD CONFIDENCE

IN OTHERS

To unleash the power within others, leaders must first express belief in them. Many of those we talked to mentioned leaders who had shouldered-tapped them or offered a word of encouragement that proved instrumental in propelling their career or life choices.

Conversely, leadership that undermines confidence in others is toxic. For instance, in one of the largest studies of burnout, Gallup found the biggest source was “unfair treatment at work.”²⁰

P6.3 PROVIDE MISSION

LEADERSHIP

Give people the broad outlines of the requirement and then let them fill in the blanks.

- Horticultural leader

The military has long practiced *mission leadership*. It unleashes initiative in fast-moving and complex situations, while also ensuring that the actions of subordinate leaders are focused on the ultimate objective. In simple terms, the overarching leader describes *what* needs to be done, and most importantly *why* it needs to be achieved.

The mission leader and team determine for themselves how to achieve the mission. The next step is key: before they embark the mission team *briefs-back* their plan to the overarching leader. Briefing the plan back ensures; there is a common understanding, the plan is sufficiently resourced, and that decision-thresholds and communication requirements are confirmed.

Perranged communications are maintained throughout the mission, but if the situation should change and communications have been lost, the mission leader knows the *why* and is expected to think on their feet to achieve the overriding purpose of the mission.

Mission leadership is well suited to a highly distributed sector where teams often operate semi-autonomously, with difficult communications. But even where that is not the case, such as in the processing or manufacturing portions of the value chains, there are still significant benefits in creating a culture where team members can exercise freedom within a mission framework.

P6.4 BE UNCOMFORTABLE;

FAILURE IS A STEPPING-

STONE NOT AN ANCHOR

STONE

We need to let young people have an opportunity to lead, and be able to make mistakes, and do so in a safe and supportive environment.

- Rural support leader

Accepting failure as part of the learning and growth process is an easier thing to say than it is to do. Nevertheless, multiple interviewees spoke to its importance.


Failure, as a waypoint to success, is a central part of entrepreneurial culture. Yet as organisations get bigger and/or as regulation and public scrutiny increase, the default is to revert to a no-surprises policy where risk is minimised. In those settings, leaders require moral courage to allow their team members to risk failure while they themselves hold the accountability.

Leaders need to look within and develop an entrepreneurial mindset. They need to accept honest failure as an essential ingredient to success and future possibilities. Indeed, beyond failure, the leader also needs to embrace the loyal dissenters, the mavericks who care enough about the organisation that they are willing to risk ridicule by thinking outside the box. The leader should also be willing to listen to the arguments of the external critics.



¹⁹Carlson, L., (2020, May, 28), ‘With’ leadership in a changing landscape, [Blog], University of Waikato, <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/professionalleadership/blog/with-leadership-in-a-changing-landscape>

²⁰Gallup, (2022), State of the Global Workplace 2022 Report THE VOICE OF THE WORLD’S EMPLOYEES, (p. 3) <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace-2022-report.aspx>



The real risk is when the leadership culture ejects these people, does not listen or in some cases does not protect them. Typically, these outliers have seen something that, if ignored, will be a blind spot to be found and exploited by the competition. Therefore, it is less about making the environment safe to fail. It is more about the leader having enough courage to shoulder the mantle and risks of leadership.

P6.5 BUILD

RESILIENCE

Noting that shouldering the risks and consequences of failure is part of the leadership equation, then it follows that resilience is a vital characteristic for all leaders to develop.

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back or recover from difficulties.

The good news is it is a learnable skill.²¹ For example, leaders can practice focusing on what they can control, taking charge of their thought life, and adopting helpful (e.g., exercise) not harmful (e.g. drugs) habits.



SECTION SUMMARY

The principles and characteristics proposed in this section are a synthesis of the insights collected during the first interview phase of this project. They will be further evaluated in the next phase. Suffice to say that, taken together, there appear to be several principles that are applicable to leading and leadership in the Food and Fibre sector.

By refining the basic principles and characteristics of good leadership as it relates to the Food and Fibre sector, it will be possible to define a development approach that inculcates the preferred leadership behaviours across the sector.

Again, it is stressed that the principles and characteristics above are developing and require further validation, including against Te Ao Māori perspectives and values and the Rochdale Principles²² that underpin cooperatives - a large force within the Food and Fibre sector.

It is a start.



²¹For instance, Agri-Women's Development Trust and NZ Rural Leaders collaborate to bring a programme to Food and Fibre leaders called know your mindset, do what matters, which combines science and practice to help leaders develop their resilience.

²²Co-operatives are guided by seven internationally agreed principles, the Rochdale Principles, which emphasise democracy and shared equity while providing economic and social returns to members and their communities. <https://nz.coop/about/>

4. CONCLUSION

There are several leadership programmes across the sector, targeted at varying leadership levels. While many of these programmes are rated highly by sector leaders, it is clear that the majority of people within the sector are not accessing leadership training, and for those that do, the leadership development pathways are often disjointed and unclear.

Further, many of the professional development programmes do not focus solely on leadership, and in some cases, leadership is only a very small component.

A table providing a brief overview of the types of leadership programmes available in the sector is provided at Annex A. The table is not exhaustive but gives a good snapshot of the current training available.

The data provided some clear themes in terms of structural, contextual, and strategic desires from interview participants.

There is a desire to professionalise the industry and improve the sector's brand, as well as to foster better collaboration between organisations within the sector, pan-sector, and beyond the sector into NZ Inc. Participants spoke of the need for better versatility and more seamless

movement of staff between organisations across the sector, as well as a need for a broader understanding of international, customer and external perspectives and macro-trends.

Education of the commercial benefits to investing in leadership development is required and leadership training needs to be accessible and inclusive, with clear benefits to individuals (it is not just for people with titles). It was identified that the sector needs leadership development at every level (self, team, operational, strategic, governance) and there needs to be clear pathways and linkages for leadership development.

Participants expressed a desire for well-designed programmes that do not just create value, but also capture and benchmark value through qualifications and credentials.

It was further noted that cohorts, networks, and mentors add considerable value to leader development and entrepreneurial success.

The key principles of leadership identified in the interviews were (1) that leading others is a privilege, (2) leaders need to be grounded, (3) leaders build relationships, (4) leadership is about teamwork, (5) leaders are accountable, and

(6) leaders unleash the potential in others.

Following these initial insights, further focus groups will be conducted with a wider range of participants across the sector during 2023. This is to test and further develop the principles and the structural, contextual, and strategic considerations. Data from this report, focus groups, and insights from literature will be iteratively consolidated to develop a Food and Fibre leadership handbook that includes tailored leadership principles, competency models, and a development pathways framework.

The final word goes to the late Maria Ngatai. Maria has been described to us as a much-loved kuia (female elder), who over her full life developed incredible wisdom.

She oft repeated the whakataukī (proverb) below. It has now become a taonga (prized heirloom) to those who loved her, and it is repeated here with their permission.

From all we have heard to date, Maria's words sum up the essence of leadership.



*It is not just about relationships,
it is all about relationships.*

- Maria Ngatai.



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NEXT - ANNEXES

5. ANNEXES

A. Snapshot of current leadership development programmes

B. Acknowledgements

A. SNAPSHOT OF LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Page 50 shows a snapshot of the leadership programmes offered within Aotearoa New Zealand's Food and Fibre sector. It does not capture all the leadership programmes and workshops that are being conducted, including by independent consultants.

Four high-level observations are worth making:

(1) There is more governance training available than strategic leadership programmes.

(2) There is a general lack of programmes, particularly when one considers that the combined through-put of all of these courses is less than 1,500 people a year (0.4% of the sector).

(3) There are significant gaps in offerings at the field and operational levels and for team development.

(4) Outside the sector there are organisations and institutions that have well developed leadership frameworks. That they have taken the time to develop coherent concepts for leader development shows that other sectors have also seen the value of positive leadership to their own sector.

B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The project team had the privilege of hearing from the following people. We wish to record our sincere thanks for their time and their insights. We look forward to meeting with more people and going deeper as the project progresses further.

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