

Prepared for:



Supporting rural women into the food and fibre sector workforce




Interview findings

November 2024









Executive summary

Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (Food and Fibre CoVE) contracted Scarlatti to undertake this research to explore the opportunity to better engage rural women in the food and fibre sector workforce who are not currently working full-time. There are approximately 15,200 rural women across New Zealand who align with the target cohort for this work. A sample of these women were surveyed and found to be generally very talented, skilled and experienced in a range of disciplines, however, face barriers that prevent them from engaging in the food and fibre sector workforce. These barriers included being time-poor, childcare, geographical isolation, misunderstandings and a lack of confidence in their abilities. We delivered a series of follow-up interviews with rural women using a similar line of questioning to test the survey findings. The objectives of the interviews, along with the associated findings, are presented below.

		
<p>1. Validate the implications of designing pathways for rural women into the workforce that were identified from the market research survey.</p>	<p>2. Assess the extent to which rural women appreciate the skills they have could be an enabler to enter the workforce.</p>	<p>3. Evaluate what rural women require from a workforce pathway for it to effectively support them into the workforce.</p>

Interview findings

<p>✓ Rural women are generally very talented and underutilised by the food and fibre sector.</p> <p>✓ There is a general lack of awareness of the workforce and training opportunities available to rural women in the food and fibre sector.</p> <p>✗ Rural women have the confidence to enter the workforce leveraging the skills and experiences they already have. The interviews suggest they would prefer extra training first.</p>	<p>Rural women have developed strong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Core transferrable (soft) skills in communication and people from previous employment and life experiences.  Core technical skills in animal management, environment, technology, and legislation/regulations from formal training and previous employment.  Rural women need support to better appreciate their skills, but also feel employers could improve how they perceive women in the food and fibre workforce. 	<p> Rural women's confidence to engage employers or submit a job application could be improved.</p> <p> Rural women would generally prefer to engage in training before entering the workforce again to learn new skills or refresh existing ones.</p> <p> Rural women are often unaware of employment and training opportunities, but the opportunities they are aware of often aren't designed to accommodate their circumstances (i.e. mitigating their barriers to engagement with employment and training).</p>
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The interview findings have been used to contextualise three commonly used principles of design – visibility, suitability and accessibility – to support the design of pathways for rural women into the food and fibre sector workforce. For this context, pathways for rural women into the food and fibre sector workforce should be:

1. **Visible.** Rural women will need to be able to see and be aware of the available workforce pathways before they can engage with them. This will mean promoting and advertising the opportunities through appropriately targeted channels for the target cohort. Rural women should also see or hear examples of other women working in the food and fibre sector, so they are not only aware of the pathways but also the opportunities out the other end.
2. **Suitable.** Rural women will only engage with a workforce pathway if it has been designed with their unique needs in mind – i.e. it has been designed suitably for their engagement. For a workforce pathway to be considered suitable, it must consider what content is applicable and required and the appropriate duration and frequency of delivery.
3. **Accessible.** Finally, the workforce pathways will need to be accessible to rural women by considering the timing of engagement (e.g. they can be engaged flexibly in and around their other priorities), how the pathway is engaged with (e.g. online / remotely vs in-person), and the cost to engage with the pathway compared to the value created.

It's also worth noting that it is important to consider the need for advocacy of women in the food and fibre workforce and the value they contribute to a food and fibre business. While we acknowledge the efforts from organisations across the sector in this space¹, we heard from the women interviewed that the advocacy could still be improved. Without better advocacy, it won't matter how well designed a pathway into the workforce is, it will still fail if the sector's employers are subconsciously prejudiced against women in the workforce. While the women we interviewed generally agreed this had improved, there were still barriers for women with particular characteristics (e.g. older in age).

An example of how the three principles could be used to design a pathway for rural women to enter the food and fibre sector workforce is illustrated below.

¹ Examples of groups supporting women advocacy include, but are not limited to, Dairy Women's Network, Meat Business Women (global), Wahine in Forestry, and Women of Aquaculture Aotearoa.



It starts with an online workshop delivered over several weeks as a micro-credential to:

1. Recognise and appreciate the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they have developed from their previous employment and life experiences,
2. Learn how to communicate their skills and experiences with prospective employers verbally and in writing, (e.g. as a CV),
3. Develop strategies to find and identify appropriate employment opportunities that align with their circumstances (e.g. flexible hours) and skill set,
4. Learn tips and tricks for during the recruitment process including how to prepare and act during interviews, and how to negotiate job requirements.

Rural women will be supported in identifying which of the three pathways into the workforce they would prefer to follow. Whichever pathway they choose, the tutor facilitating the workshop delivery will provide further support to point them in the right direction - e.g. where to look for jobs and what training provision is available for the skills they want to develop.

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Introduction

Context

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) sponsored a small-scale study in late 2023 that explored the opportunity to formally recognise the skills and knowledge rural women acquire informally as leverage to enter the food and fibre workforce. These rural women were not employed in the sector at the time but had indicated aspirations to do so; either part- or full-time. The outcomes from the study were positive and successfully transitioned most of the study's participants into the workforce.

Building off this work, Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (Food and Fibre CoVE) contracted Scarlatti to undertake two pieces of research to explore the opportunity to better engage rural women in the workforce:

1. **A market size analysis** to estimate the number of rural women in the target cohort and their relevant characteristics / attributes,
2. **Market research** to test the demand for pathways that support rural women into the food and fibre sector workforce. The market research is split into two phases: a survey and a series of follow-up interviews.

To date, we have completed the market size analysis and the market research survey and reported the results to Food and Fibre CoVE – see below for a summary of these results. The market research interviews are the focus of this report.

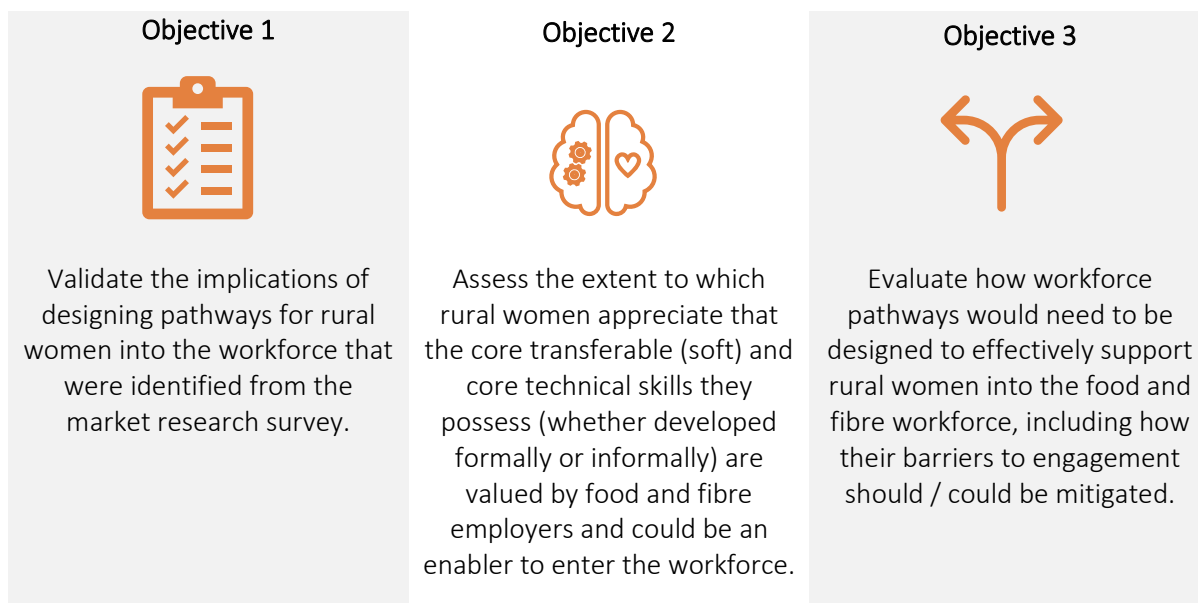
Findings to date – Market size and research survey

The market size analysis concluded there were approximately 15,200 rural women who align with the target cohort across New Zealand. The market research survey had 138 responses with 48 aligning with the target cohort. The implications for designing pathways into the workforce for rural women that we identified from the survey findings included:

1. There are a lot of very talented, skilled, and experienced rural women in the food and fibre sector who are underutilised (i.e. not working full-time), although engaging them effectively will be challenging given their barriers to engagement (e.g. children, lack of time, etc.)
2. These women generally lack awareness of the workforce and training opportunities available in the sector. A focus on building awareness of these opportunities may be necessary to generate demand for the workforce pathways before investing too much in the pathway's design.
3. Most rural women surveyed would have the confidence to approach employers or respond to job advertisements now rather than go through further training or have their skills formally recognised. These results highlight a potential opportunity to support rural women into the workforce by providing clarity on the recruitment process, instilling self-confidence to approach employers, and working through some tips and tricks to effectively communicate the value of their skills and experience. This pathway may be more effective than designing a pathway that formally recognises the skills rural women have developed informally.

Objectives for the market research interviews

The three objectives of the market research interviews with rural women were to:



Structure of this report

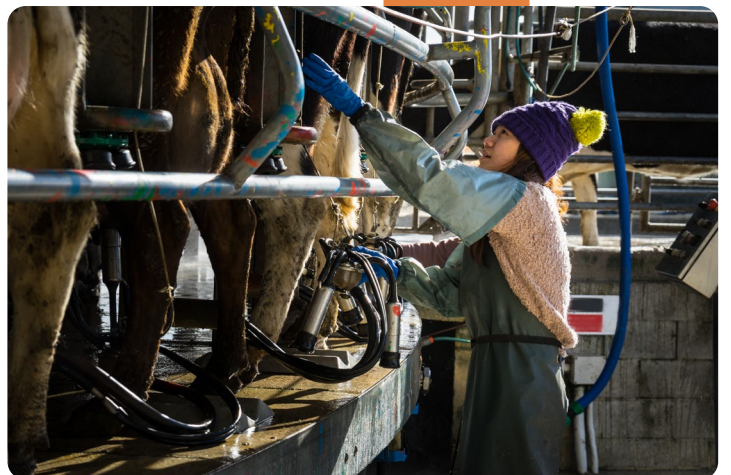
This report is split into the following four sections from here:

- A. The **approach and methodologies** used to deliver the qualitative market research interviews,
- B. The **interview findings** in relation to each of the above three research objectives,
- C. The **recommended principles** for designing pathways for rural women to enter the workforce,
- D. **Appendices** with additional information to support sections A to C.

A

Approach and methodologies


An overview of the approach and methodologies taken to deliver the market research interviews.




Approach

Target cohort


The target audience for the interviews were rural women who are:



Aged 18 – 65 years old



In a relationship with someone working in a food and fibre industry



Not currently working full-time and would like to be involved in the food and fibre workforce to a greater degree than they are now*

*Note, some women who considered their current employment status as full-time were still interviewed. This is because they could still offer valid perspectives around what has helped their engagement in the workforce and reflect on any challenges they may have faced in the past.

Interview guide design

The interview guide and supporting materials were designed iteratively with Scarlatti, Food and Fibre CoVE and HTK Group. Key steps in the process involved:

- Having an initial discussion between Scarlatti and Food and Fibre CoVE to confirm priorities and key question areas for the project.
- Conducting a brainstorming session involving Scarlatti, Food and Fibre CoVE and HTK Group to discuss options to ensure an interview and data management approach that incorporated Te Ao Māori perspectives.
- Drafting a full interview pack including recruitment materials, information sheets, consent language and the full interview guide and sharing it with Food and Fibre COVE and HTK Group for feedback. As part of this process, Food and Fibre CoVE also shared the interview materials with two organisations that support rural women for further review.

After receiving feedback from both Food and Fibre CoVE and HTK Group, Scarlatti then finalised the interview guide and supporting materials. The interview guide's language was slightly tweaked over time as interviews were conducted and the project team saw how interviewees responded to the original questions. For the most up-to-date version of the interview guide, please see Appendix 1: Interview guide.

Method

Rural women were provided with options for participating in interviews. They could either have their interview conducted online via Microsoft Teams or over the phone. Interviews took between 30-60 minutes each and involved two interviewers from Scarlatti. Participants were gifted a \$100 Prezzy card as a show of appreciation for their time and feedback.

All women were provided with information before their interview started about the interview's purpose and expected length. Verbal informed consent was gathered before beginning an interview by asking women whether they were comfortable with what the interview involved and if they had any questions before the interview started. They were also asked if they were okay with the interview being recorded and were offered the option of having their recording sent to them afterwards as a record of the insights and experiences they shared. To make the process as comfortable as possible for women, we only used female interviewers.

The interviews were semi-structured, utilising the interview guide (Appendix 1: Interview guide) as the basis for the interviews.

Wāhine Māori interviews

Responses from the initial market survey were skewed toward Pākehā women whose experiences may differ in important ways from women of other ethnicities. As part of this work, we actively sought wāhine Māori interviewees. The initial plan was to offer face-to-face interviews, as this prioritised whakawhanaungatanga². To support a more informed view of rural women's preferred pathways into the workforce, Scarlatti planned to:

- Speak with a sample of at least 5-10 wāhine Māori.
- Work with HTK Group to create different recruitment options and interview methods that were culturally responsive and better suited to the ways wāhine Māori may prefer to engage and be engaged with.

Unforeseen delays in recruiting wāhine Māori for interviews meant they, unfortunately, needed to be performed online or over the phone due to a reduced sample. For these interviews, wāhine were:

- Offered the presence of an additional Scarlatti team member to ensure that tikanga was honoured throughout the interview process. This included things like opening the session with a karakia, creating a space for women to use kupu Māori and increasing comfort levels.
- Allowed to bring a support person with them. This recognised that some women would feel more comfortable and confident to participate if they had a support person with them, such as a kaumātua.

Participant information

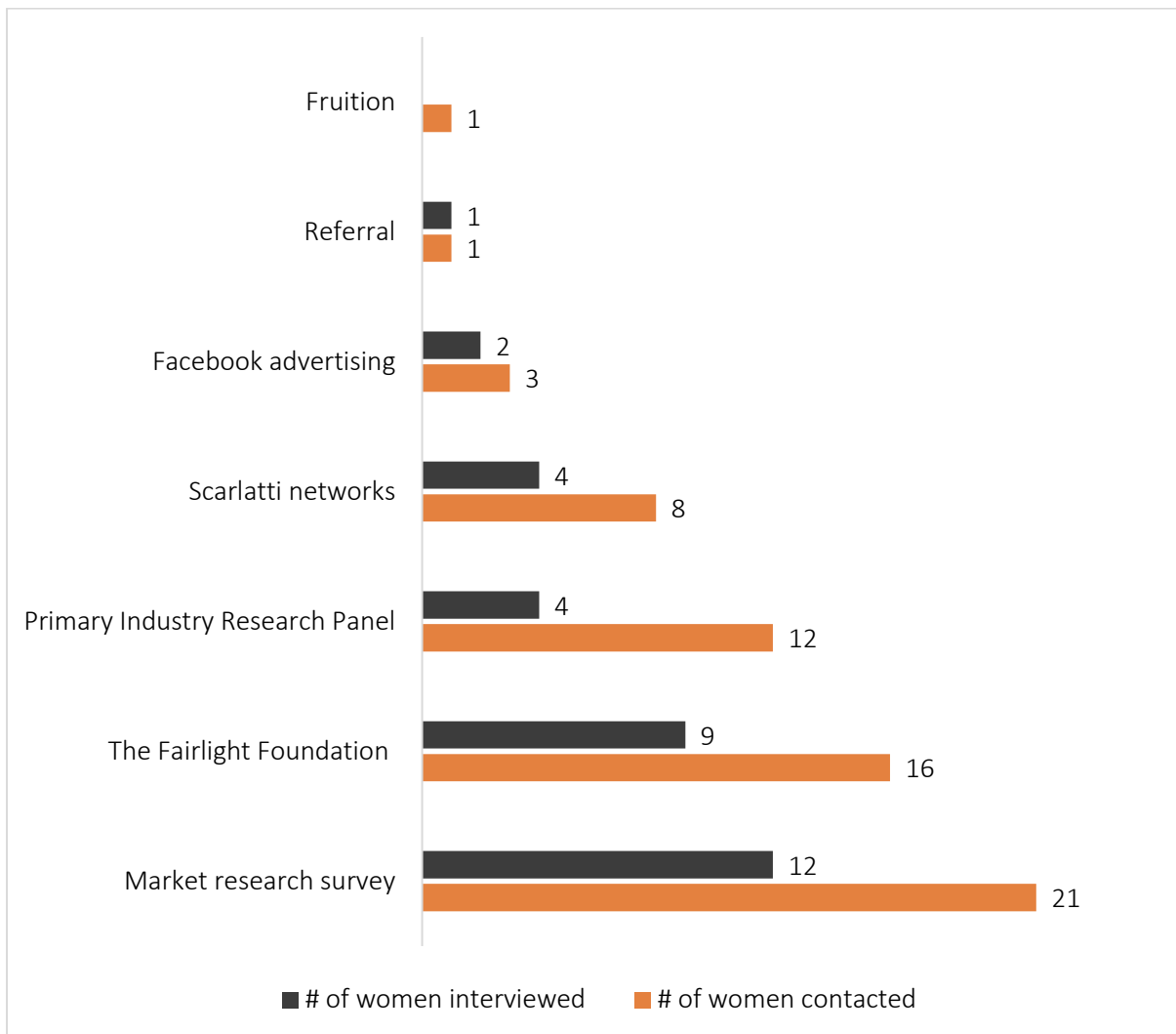
This section provides an overview of the two attributes that were asked of interviewees. They are: 1. What industry their partner works in, and 2. Past employment information.

Recruitment

We engaged seven channels to recruit rural women to participate in interviews (Figure 1). A total of 61 women were contacted, with interviews being completed with 31 women, three of which were wāhine Māori.

² The process of building relationships.

Figure 1: Recruitment channels



For each rural woman interviewed we collected information about their:

- Partner’s industry of employment,
- Their current employment status and aspirations to engage with the workforce more, and
- Their employment history.

Partners’ industry of employment

Most women interviewed lived on / have partners who work in pastoral farming industries:

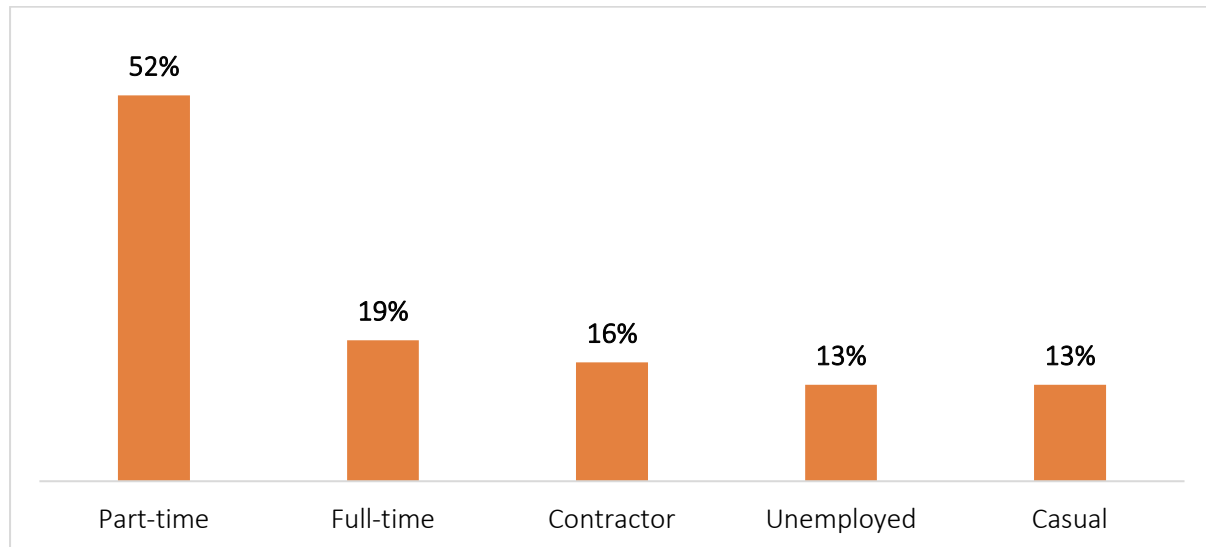
- Over half (53%, 16 out of 30) live on / have partners who work on sheep and beef farms, while
- 40% of women (12 out of 30) live on / have partners who work on dairy farms.

We do not expect the skew in respondents towards pastoral farming industries to reduce the relevance of this work’s findings for other rural industries such as horticulture, forestry or aquaculture. This is due to many of the engagement barriers rural women identified were not industry-specific and either related to their personal circumstances or the geographical isolation.

Current employment status and aspiration to engage more

Most of the rural women interviewed (87%) were in some kind of employment at the time of interviewing, whether they were part-time employed, casually employed, or working as a contractor (Figure 2). Over half of the interviewees (54%) who were employed in some capacity aspired to increase their utilisation in the sector (i.e. work more). The reasons we heard for wanting to work more included wanting to contribute to the farm / sector more and seeking more income. However, some women noted that children, in particular, were preventing them from working more. No one said they wanted to be working less.

Figure 2: Current employment status

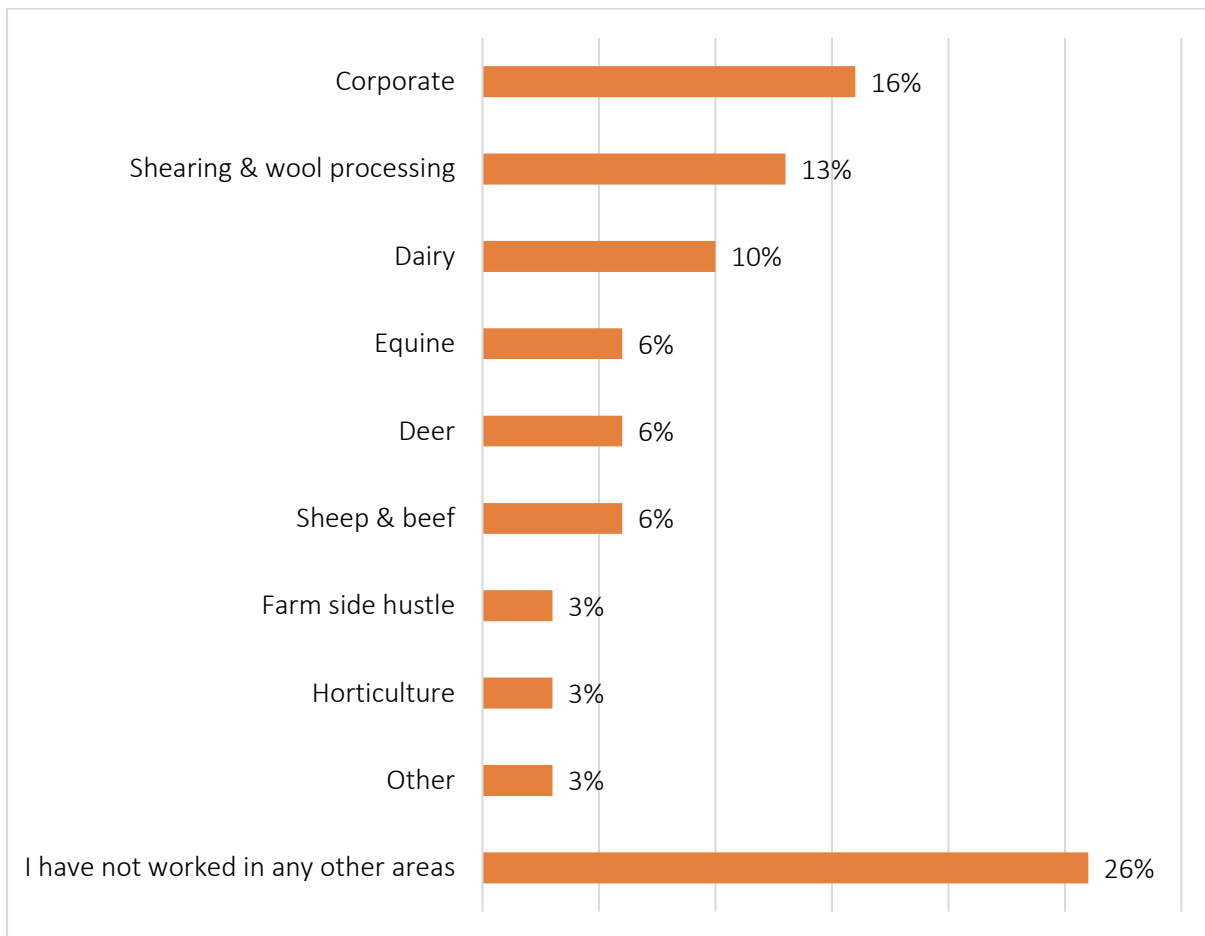


13% of rural women interviewed were not employed at the time of interviewing, with half having left their previous employment within the last six months. Reasons for leaving jobs were varied, but half cited their children as the reasons (e.g. either wanting more children or wanting to support their children more). All unemployed interviewees aspired to re-enter the workforce at some point but were limited by their current situation and responsibilities.

Employment history

All women were asked whether they had any other employment experiences in the food and fibre sector to their current position (Figure 3). Women had the most experience working for industry groups (such as Beef + Lamb New Zealand or Dog Trials – 32%, 10 out of 31) or community groups (such as catchment groups or Rural Support Trust – 29%, 9 out of 31). This was followed by 19%, (6 out of 31) having worked in sales and marketing related to the food and fibre sector. A further 26% (8 out of 31) of women said that they had not worked in another area of the food and fibre sector other than the farm type they were currently living / working on.

Figure 3: Areas of previous employment within the food and fibre sector



In addition to their past employment experiences within the food and fibre sector, nearly two-thirds of women (62%, 18 out of 29) have also been employed outside of the food and fibre sector in roles such as hospitality, teaching / education, banking and tourism.

Two-thirds (66%, 19 out of 29) of rural women have also had experience volunteering within their community on Boards or committees, helping at their marae and with charitable organisations in a range of different roles.

B

Interview findings

A detailed presentation of what we heard from rural women during their interviews in response to the three objectives for the market research interviews.



Objective 1: Validating the survey findings



Objective 1

Validate the implications of designing pathways for rural women into the food and fibre workforce that have been identified from the market research survey.

We will address the first research objective during ‘Part C: Recommended Design Principles’ on page 34 after the findings in response to objectives 2 and 3 have been presented, and the associated design implications identified. Then we will be able to validate or invalidate the findings from the survey.

Objective 2: Appreciation of skills possessed



Objective 2

Assess the extent to which rural women appreciate that the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they possess (whether developed formally or informally) are valued by food and fibre employers and could be an enabler to enter the workforce.

The following section of this report addresses the second research objective for the market research interviews. We started by asking rural women to identify, from a list (see Appendix 1: Interview guide page 41), the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they felt they possessed and how they had developed their skills. We continued to ask whether they appreciated the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they had were appreciated by employers in the food and fibre sector.

Core transferable (soft) skills

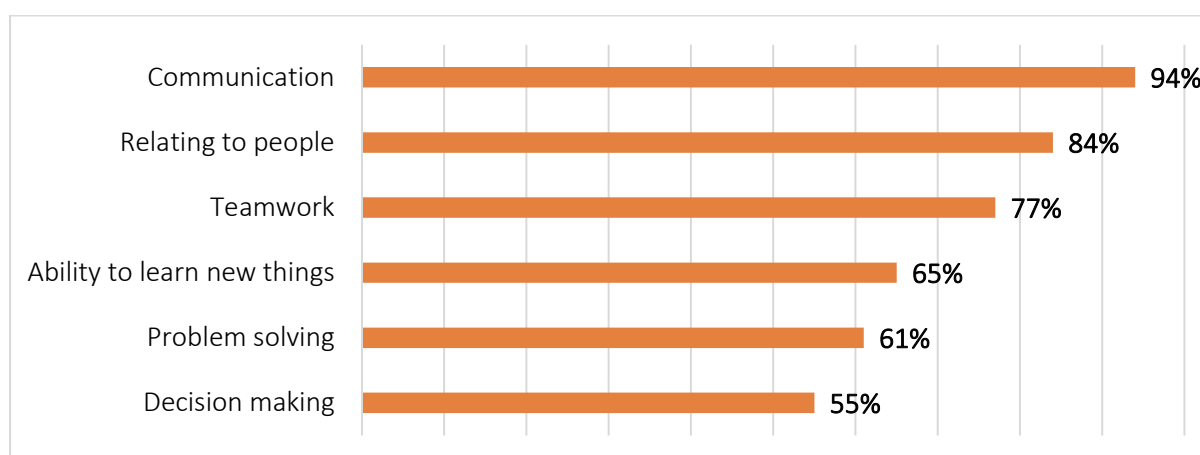
What *core transferable (soft)* skills do rural women have?

Women were asked what their core transferable (soft) skills are. These were described as skills that can be used in different contexts, including outside the food and fibre sector and might be useful in any role. The main transferrable (soft) skill women saw as a strength was clear communication (94%, 29 out of 31), this was followed by the ability to relate to people with different backgrounds (84%, 26 out of 31), and working with others in a team (77%, 24 out of 31) (see Figure 4). When



asked if there were any other skills in addition to those in Figure 4 (which they were prompted with during the interview), several rural women indicated they also had leadership skills (26%), were flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances (13%), and could work in isolation (10%).

Figure 4: Core transferrable (soft) skills women possess (n=31)



This indicates that rural women tend to have transferrable (soft) skills that involve working with others. We heard the following from rural women during the interviews about their core transferrable (soft) skills:

“Communication is quite big for me because it just makes life so much easier and I'm not very good with things like conflict or anything like that. So, the more open with communication I am the least chance of there being a conflict because you kind of cover most of the bases so that hopefully if anything happens, it's covered.”

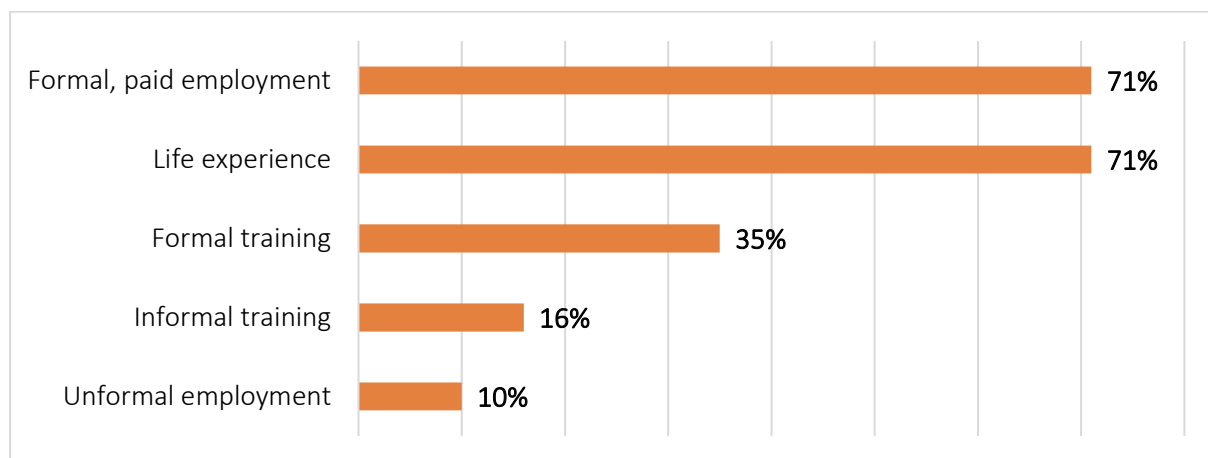
“Relating to people, if you can relate to somebody and get down onto their level, you've already got a foot in and it makes it a hell of a lot easier to work with them rather than work against them.”

“Teamwork obviously. Farming businesses are a team. Anywhere I've worked I probably favour teamwork or situations where I'm working with others than alone. I'm happy to be led but also lead when required.”

How have rural women developed their *core transferable (soft) skills*?

Over two-thirds of women (71%, 22 out of 31) developed their core transferrable (soft) skills through life experiences including their upbringing or situations where they have been pushed out of their comfort zone (see Figure 5). Soft skills were also developed by 71% (22 out of 31) during formal, paid employment. Life experience and formal employment were heard to be more prevalent in developing transferrable (soft) skills than formal training (35%, 11 out of 31). Adding to this, rural women noted that even when they attended formal training, most found the soft skills developed from other experiences were more valuable. Given the limited opportunities to develop transferrable (soft) skills, this is not a surprising result.

Figure 5: How women built their soft skills (n=31)



From the interviews, we heard the following about how rural women have developed their core transferrable (soft) skills:

“Life experience – As a parent you learn a lot and become quite resilient and on a farm you become resilient. You naturally have to be a hard worker – there is always something to do.”

“A lot through my employment – I've had a lot of time to grow and learn. I've been able to take this outside and build better relationships with my family because I've got a lot more understanding and patience and I'm a lot more aware of myself.”

“I've had formal training in a lot of those things. When I went to uni I did a law degree and business degree. We had communication papers in that. Lots of this stuff was built into the papers.”

Core technical skills

What *core technical*/skills do rural women have?

Women were also asked what core technical skills they possessed. Core technical skills were defined as skills specific to the food and fibre sector, that may even be specialised or industry-specific. The most common core technical skill amongst women (81%, 25 out of 31) was their animal skills, particularly around animal health and management (see Figure 6). This was followed by nearly two-thirds of women having technical skills in technology (61%, 19 out of 31) and the environment (65%, 20 out of 31). In particular, the technological skills women held were often around accounting or animal-related software. When asked if there were any other skills in addition to those in Figure 6 (which they were prompted with during the interview), several rural women indicated they also had technical skills in project / business management (39%), accounting (13%), and building and using tools (10%).

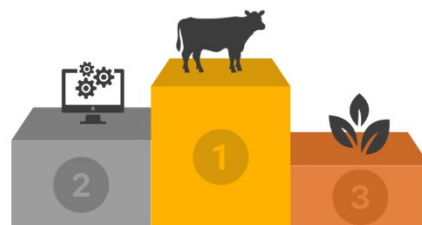
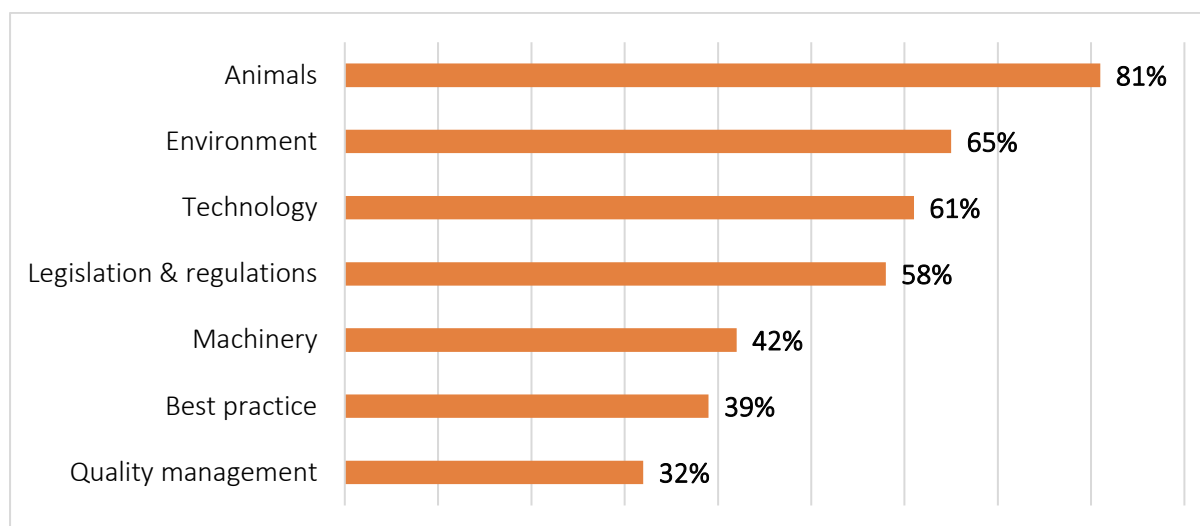


Figure 6: Technical skills women possess (n=31)



From the interviews, we heard the following about what core technical skills women have:

"I can do nearly all animal health things except for when we don't have the appropriate facilities. But I'm more than happy to do most jobs with that. I'm really good at recognising when animals are sick. My biggest skills are with baby animals, I can keep them alive. I can recognise illness. I can treat illness and I can make them thrive."

"Technology, growing up with computers. Looking into technology on machinery, GPS systems and things like that. Looking a different ways we could be more efficient on farm with."

"We've always had clear grass and trees. Make sure that was all that was stockproof. We've got a river that goes straight through our farm... We've always had to be really on top when it comes to making sure that all the fences have been up to scratch so that the cows don't actually end up in the water or...contaminating everybody's water."

Wāhine Māori also shared that the core technical skills they had related to mātauranga, because of a love and desire to care for the land, and manaaki, relating to how they run their businesses in a supportive, genuine way.

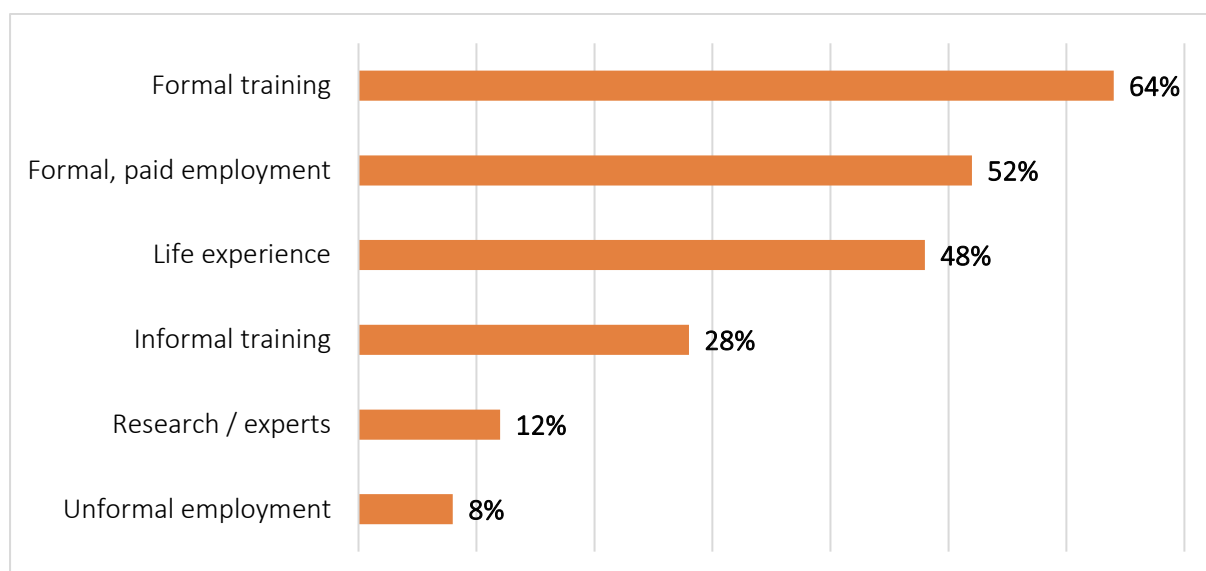
“Manaaki is a really big driving factor in our family. It’s not offering, doing. Not putting a hollow offer out. It’s going out of your way to take pressure off people...That comes through really strongly in what we do and our responsibilities to make sure that we’re helping and supporting.”

We farm because we love the land and we want to look after the land and we want it to be left in better condition than when we came to it, so that it’s just forever replenishing and going to be there for future generations. That attachment that you have to the land and to the animals as well is massive. It’s a life cycle – it’s not a job. It’s part of who we are. It becomes more than just your income.

How have rural women developed their *core technical* skills?

Over two-thirds of women (68%, 21 out of 31) built their core technical skills through formal training (see Figure 7). This included university degrees (42%, 9 out of 21), diplomas (14%, 3 out of 21) and courses (52%, 11 out of 21) completed either through their employment or in their own time. This was followed by just over half of women (52%, 16 out of 31) learning on-the job through formal, paid employment, and just under half of women (42%, 13 out of 31) learning through life experience, where it had been a necessity to build these skills over the years living or working on-farm. The below indicates that core technical skills are built through more formal means in comparison to transferrable (soft) skills which are more commonly built through life experience.

Figure 7: How women built their core technical skills (n=31)



From the interviews, we heard the following about how women developed their core technical skills:

I’ve done a few courses through work, Primary ITO, and my honours degree.

For the quality management for health and safety I did work for somebody for a short period of time. Because of my ability to assimilate a lot of information quickly then I just was able to transfer that across to environmental.

It's all through the experiences I'd say, of what's happened on farm and it just never ends.

Women need support to better appreciate their skills

When asked about their soft and technical skills, women commonly found it difficult to recognise the skills they possess and how they could be transferrable. If they were prompted or shown options (see Appendix 1: Interview guide page 41), it was much easier. Women stated that this was a difficult task and that it felt uncomfortable talking about all the things that were great at. Pathways into the workforce would need to consider this and support women to identify and better appreciate all the valuable skills they could bring to the food and fibre sector, and not be afraid to promote themselves.

Women want employers to better recognise and value their skills

For women who do work on-farm part-time, they often described colleagues and bosses:

- Not seeing them as leaders on-farm
- Not listening to them
- Not thinking their opinions were valid
- Not thinking / believing they could do physical tasks.

We heard the following from rural women about the challenges they face with their employers:

“Feeling empowered and confident to call the shots a little bit and make people work for us rather than the other way around.”

“I found it really hard to compete against ‘man’s men’. My old boss, he was good, he put a lot of pressure on me and was really tough on me. It wasn’t just in my head – I did check with my workmates. To get a promotion I had to work so much harder than what other people seemed to...I could never seem to do enough to earn [the promotion] even though I was the one making the calls. It felt like I was hitting my head against a brick wall trying everything that I could to just be told it wasn't quite enough, but not be told what I could do for it to be enough.”

Women felt this was often exacerbated by having breaks from work whilst bringing up children or fulfilling responsibilities on their farm. They felt this reduced employers’ belief in their skills and knowledge and created gaps in their employment history.

Women also described the difficulties in getting back into work at later stages in life. They described how they felt they were the ideal candidates for employment, as they had the experience and flexibility due to their children having left home. However, they felt employers and society often believe they should be slowing down and are not fit for roles in the food and fibre sector.

“I think there’s a certain amount of ageism creep and I’m not impressed about that. I’m only in my mid-50s and I still feel fun, and most people would say I have high energy, definitely passion and ability to bring to a role. I’m likely to be here for the next 15 or 20 years. I’m not going anywhere. I’ve passed the point of having a young family. I’m mobile, I’m independent...People are saying “maybe you’re just a bit past it.”

As well as describing the need to better appreciate and acknowledge their skills, women felt that if employers could appreciate and acknowledge their skills and potential better, it would help overcome some barriers to entering the workforce (33%, 10 out of 30). This won’t be an easy barrier to overcome and yet is highly important in achieving a culture change amongst employers and how they perceive

and value women in the sector. Women specifically discussed the desire for employers to look past their gender and instead trust them more and hold their skills more highly. For example, this could include:

- **Recognising the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills women have gained** during the periods where they have not been in formal employment (instead of seeing this time away as a weakness).
- **Looking beyond formal qualifications** and instead at the skills women have developed through hands-on and life experiences. We heard:

“People actually being open minded to it and reading someone’s CV and not looking at whether they are a male or a female and actually just reading their CV and taking into account their qualifications and their experiences and their skills, and just basing it off that instead of seeing the name and being like, “oh, it’s a woman”... It would be nice if people would just ignore that and focus on what someone can bring to the table. If everything sounds good and there are gaps in their CV, ask them about it...don’t let that negatively affect your opinion because they might not have been putting everything into practise day-to-day, but it’s not been forgotten. They’ve also been learning new skills while parenting.”

“There’s so many skilled women out there on the back blocks of farms – they’re really educated and intelligent and have incredible skills. It’s just finding a way for them to be able to contribute a little bit more. And employers sort of seeing the value and yes, it might mean spending a little bit to fly them or drive them into offices every now and again, but I think the value that businesses would get from them would be huge.”

Key points to note:

- Women possess an array of core transferable (soft) and core technical skills but find both them and employers can struggle to recognise such skills, particularly when they have been developed informally.
- Rural women have diverse experiences working across different industries within the food and fibre sector.
- Pathways need to be designed to help women identify and better appreciate all the valuable skills they could bring to the food and fibre sector and not be afraid to promote themselves.
- Changing employers’ perceptions of women needs to be considered when designing pathways. Employers need to be encouraged to recognise the value women can bring to the food and fibre sector. In doing so, pathways should encourage employers to recognise the skills women have gained during periods where they have not been formally employed and look beyond formal qualifications to instead focus on the skills women have developed through hands-on and life experiences (i.e. informally).

Objective 3: Workforce pathway requirements



Objective 3

Evaluate how workforce pathways would need to be designed to effectively support rural women into the food and fibre workforce, including how their barriers to engagement should / could be mitigated.

The following section of this report addresses the third research objective for the market research interviews. The interviews with rural women were reasonably free flowing at this point with the general discussion centred on what support rural women would need a workforce pathway to provide given the barriers they have faced, and continue to face when it comes to engaging with training or the workforce.

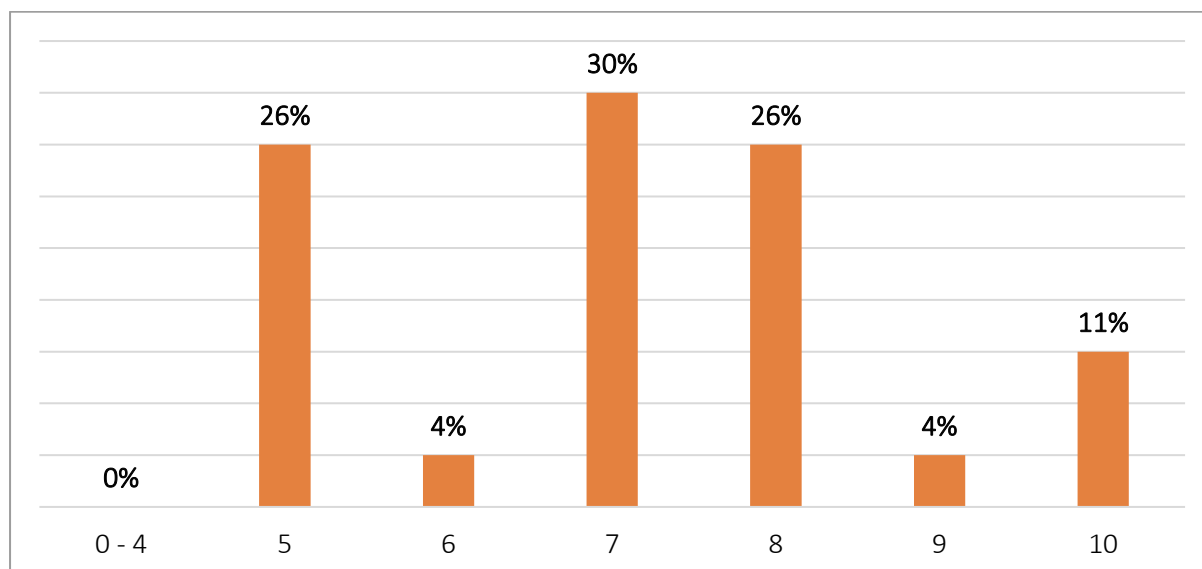
Confidence to engage in training and / or the workforce

Current confidence in applying for a job

Women were asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 10, how confident they would be to apply for a job or engage a potential employer in their current position; where 0 is not confident at all, and 10 is extremely confident (Figure 8). 41% of women (11 out of 27) rated their confidence an 8 or above, with 11% (3 out of 27) rating themselves a 10. These women could recognise their skills that were transferrable and valued by employers. We heard:

“I’m much more confident in myself than I ever used to be, if I think I can do it, then I’ll do it.”

Figure 8: On a scale from 0 – 10 how confident would you be submitting an application or reaching out to an employer about a job right now? (n=27)



The rating rural women gave themselves was materially different to what we heard from them qualitatively during the interview. Figure 8 would suggest that most rural women are fairly confident, ranking themselves at a 7 or above, however, we heard in their responses that there was instead a general lack of confidence from 61% (19 out of 31) of the rural women who were interviewed. They

emphasised that they would benefit from a pathway that was designed to build their confidence as the first step.

Factors influencing confidence

Rural women shared several factors that negatively affected their confidence; these could be internal and / or external:

- **External factors** included the availability of jobs in their areas that were limited and often unable to accommodate their lifestyle requirements (e.g. flexibility to work around school hours). The limited number of jobs results in a competitive recruitment process, and rural women are pitted against each other, instead of supporting and encouraging each other.

“It's just so hard getting employment in rural places. In the towns I've lived there's been one cafe - a lot of people would have to travel to work. It's a hard one. I've been lucky in finding stuff.”

“I was at a workshop one day and people said “what do you think gets in the way of female succeeding?” And I popped up and was all brave and said I think sometimes it's other females. That alpha female thing is actually a pain.”

- **Internal factors** included women feeling their skills were out of date following an extended period away from the workforce, and that they were no longer familiar with what was expected of them from the job application process. 19% of women indicated the internal factors were particularly relevant for them.

“Confidence after being out of the work for so long. I think once I get back into it, I'll be away, it's just that first step. When I actually get into it and then go “OK I can do this now” but you always have that bit of self-doubt, don't you?”

There were a further 15% who indicated they were unable to recognise the skills they had, how the skills were transferrable, or how relevant they were to the available job – three additional internal factors that affected their confidence.

“There are so many people who have all these skills that are actually listed that they've got on the job application. Like, what do I have? I'm just like, I'm just as far as life as I'm bit of everything just to keep everything going.”

Building confidence in rural women

Rural women often did not recognise their transferrable skills

Over one-third of rural women (37%, 11 out of 31) highlighted that being able to identify and recognise the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they have developed would be an important step in building their confidence towards entering employment. This is a challenging task as it will require women to improve their self-awareness and change their perspective of themselves to appreciate the transferability and value of their skills. Achieving this would help women become strong advocates for themselves and the value they can contribute.

“Helping them to understand that their skill set is greater than they probably realise. And that their skills are actually transferrable into other roles, they probably don't actually realise how many of those skills they're ticking on a day-to-day basis.”

“People are often underselling themselves and their capability and how they could apply for something more unique for themselves or their industry.”

Rural women mentioned the following options could be used to support and build their confidence.



Coaching and mentoring



Help with pulling together
experience



Support person / someone to
vouch for you

- Just under half of women (48%, 15 out of 31) interviewed commented that having access to coaching and mentoring would likely be the most effective way to support them in building their confidence when entering employment or engaging with training. All wāhine Māori interviewed also said that Māori specific coaching and mentoring would be highly beneficial.
- Nearly half of women (48%, 15 out of 31) mentioned having support to compile an effective CV that appropriately communicates their skills and experience to a potential employer. Some women did not know the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process existed and indicated that they would be interested in this process if there was better promotion and availability of this support.

Rural women see the value in engaging in formal training and having their skills and qualifications formally recognised

Half of the women interviewed (52%, 15 out of 29) indicated they were interested in a combination of having their existing skills formally recognised by RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) and participating in training to learn new skills or refine existing skills.

- About a quarter of women said they were comfortable with the skills and qualifications they currently possess (24%, 7 out of 29) and, therefore, felt this was not something they needed.
- Some women said that depending on the employer or job advertisement, this may be something they would be interested in but not in all circumstances (24%, 7 out of 26).

Of the women interested in training, over half (56%, 9 out of 16) indicated that they see value in formally recognising their previous skills and experience *as well as* engaging in new training before entering employment.

- Over a quarter of women (31%, 5 out of 16) indicated they would be more interested in engaging in new training as they felt like they could already advocate for themselves and the skills and experience they have without needing these skills to be formally recognised.
- 59% of women (10 out of 17) indicated that the reason they were interested in engaging in training before entering employment as it would increase their confidence in themselves and their abilities when entering employment.

“You go from not feeling like having that accomplishment of learning, passing basic little tests increases your confidence in your abilities and confidence in what you're doing.”

- Women also felt that engaging in training also demonstrates to employers that they are 'teachable' and are open to learning new things.

"Employers want people who are teachable regardless of whether you've got those skills or not. You want to be able to show that you can be taught."

- For the women who wanted formal qualifications linked to their current skillsets, they felt this would make the job application process easier as it would validate their current experience.

Rural women mentioned the importance of supporting mental health

Acknowledging the pressure put on rural women and how this impacts their mental health and subsequently their confidence when entering employment was an important point raised.

"Mental health has a bit to play in this, women have high rates of depression and anxiety from carrying the weight of their husband's issues...the environment...the weather...the finances and the kids...being in an isolated place and not valuing yourself or your skills is a huge risk. Sometimes you need to pull them out of that hole before you can even look for employment."

A large factor that impacts mental health, particularly in rural areas is isolation. Some women feel mentally isolated in the day-to-day challenges they face, as well as physically isolated due to living in remote locations. This impacts the confidence of women when considering entering employment as they feel alone in the barriers they face and daunted by the travel required to engage in employment.

Increasing networking opportunities to build connections with other food and fibre women was mentioned by 23% of women (7 out of 31) as a consideration that could help remove feelings of isolation and increase confidence through speaking and relating to others in similar circumstances.

It's easy to draw back and not do much networking and don't get involved with many things, and then just the confidence kind of goes. It's about keeping in touch with people I guess, especially when you've got young kids then it can be harder as well.

Key points to note:

- Women's confidence in reaching out to employers or submitting job applications could be improved. Various internal and external factors serve as barriers to employment, affecting women's confidence levels.
- Women need support to recognise their core transferable (soft) and core technical skills; this could be through coaching and mentoring, help pulling together experience, or having a support person.
- Almost half of the women indicated that engaging in new training or having their previous skills and experience formally recognised would increase their confidence in entering employment.
- The isolation experienced by rural women often affects their mental health. By offering networking opportunities for these women to connect with peers in the food and fibre sector may help overcome this challenge. These connections enable them to build confidence by sharing experiences and challenges with others in similar situations.

Rural women face barriers due to the nature of training and job opportunities

Women are often unaware of training or job opportunities

26% of women (8 out of 31) reported that limited awareness of the training available to them or not knowing if the training was suitable, was a barrier. Many said they were interested in training but did not know where to start, or what training could help them progress into the food and fibre workforce.

“You’ve really got to go and look for what you’re after. It would be good to have some more information out there in terms of advertising.”

29% of women (9 out of 31) indicated that having greater visibility of the job opportunities available to them would be helpful when looking to enter employment. Women mentioned they often do not know where to go to get an overview of job opportunities, stressing the importance of this being clear when jobs in rural areas can be limited.

“It’s just hard finding those jobs in those rural areas. I’m sure there are jobs there. It’s just thinking outside the square and making those connections.”

A lack of flexibility and options can cause barriers for women

Over half of women (58%, 18 out of 31) said a **lack of flexibility** within jobs and training was a **barrier to engaging in employment**. This included difficulties in finding jobs that:

- **Fit within school hours** so they could still drop off and pick up their children.

“The hours I could be available, they had to be school hours. By the time I get my son off to school, maybe driving an hour an hour and a half to get where I need to be. I mean, I’d maybe be there for a couple of hours, and I’d be turning around and coming back again.”

- **Allowed them to quickly go out on-farm** if required and work around the busy seasons on-farm.

“May-June I’m sitting on the couch like “what should I do?!” but come July-August I don’t even have time to go on my phone and I love it. In terms of a job, how am I meant to work that unless I get someone to pick up my slack and then I need to pay for that? Farming’s not all go all the time, but then you get these fluctuations where you’re like “oh man, I’m busy”

- **Were flexible in the number of hours worked** each day and when they could be worked.

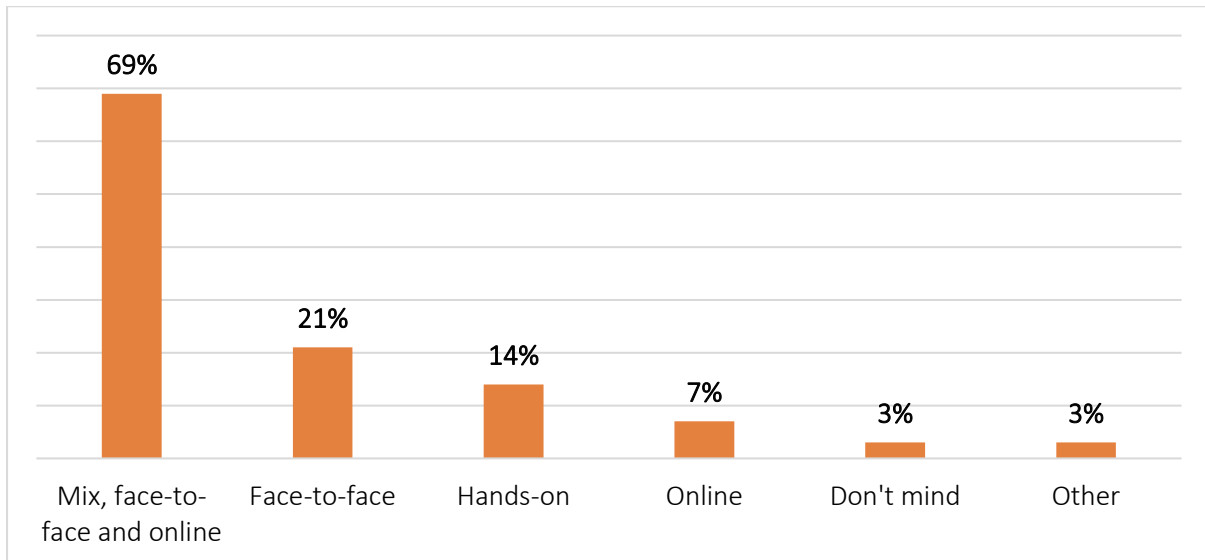
“Struggling to find something that fits the hours required. A lot of jobs need consistency through the week.”

For training, over two-thirds of women (69%, 20 out of 29) preferred a mixed approach to training delivery that incorporates both online and face-to-face sessions. Women saw the value of face-to-face sessions and the ability to form networks with others in a training course. However, including online sessions makes training more logistically viable as living in isolated areas and having to travel into town is a barrier to participating in training.

“I think a bit of a mix of both. Online is really good. I already do a lot online. Face-to-face is good because you get to sit down around a table, hear other people’s opinions and that sort of thing.”

In saying this, some women would rather training be entirely face-to-face (21%, 6 out of 29) or hands-on practical training (14%, 4 out of 29), as they felt they would get more out of the training.

Figure 9: Preferred type of training (n=29)



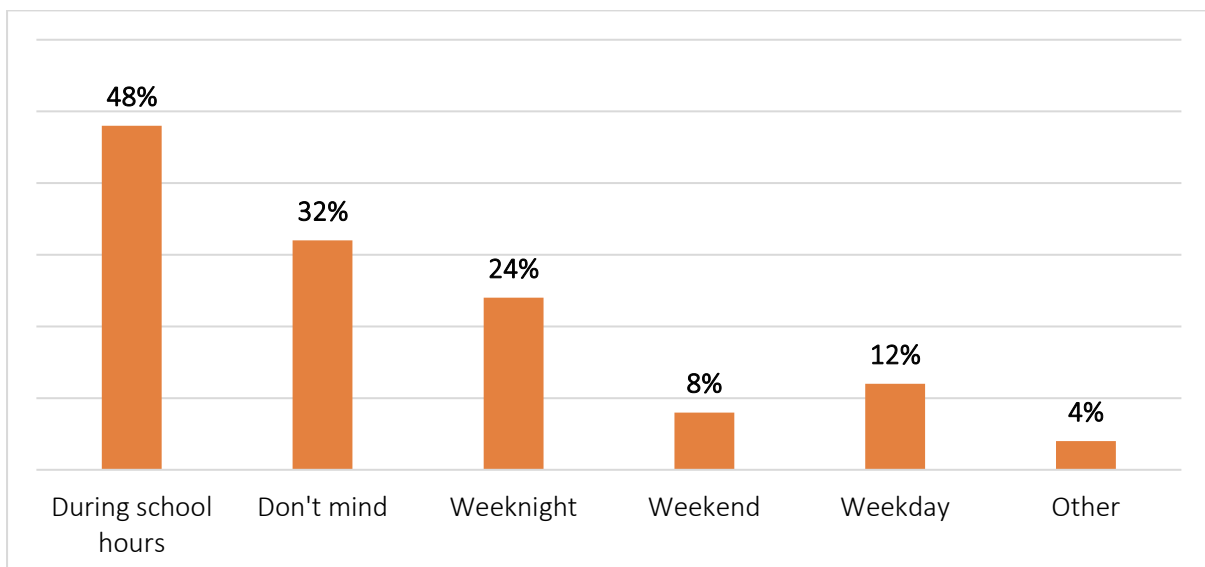
Nearly half of women (48%, 12 out of 25) reported that attending training during school hours works best for them. The middle of the day is most commonly the time women have the most flex between organising and transporting children and helping out on-farm.

“[Offer training] in the 4 hour period in the middle of the day so I can still help on-farm and look after the kids and I can focus on training.”

Nearly one-third of women (32%, 8 out of 25) would not mind about the timing of training, as long as they are given enough notice in advance to put supports in place to attend.

“Probably anything, to be honest, because as long as you have enough warning, you can make arrangements to make it happen.”

Figure 10: Preferred timing of training (n=25)



A lack of flexible childcare options can be a barrier for women

Just over one-third of women (34%, 10 out of 29) said **children were a barrier to employment** (this was approximately half of the women interviewed who have young children). The main reasons were a lack of childcare close to the farm that would enable women to go to work and balancing the desire and responsibilities of being a Mum with employment. 21% of women (6 out of 29) also mentioned **children being a barrier to training** (three of these women are *not* represented in the nine women who mention children as a barrier to employment above).

“I think that the hardest thing for women that are working on-farm, alongside trying to probably do the majority raising children and then try and get work for themselves. I think for the majority of women it's trying to find time alongside children and farming commitments to get that other role.”

“Childcare is huge. 10-20 years ago we used to have a hub and use the local hall and drop kids off and take turns looking after each other's kids.”

More education around te reo; tikanga; whānau, hapū and iwi dynamics would reduce barriers

Wāhine Māori described the need for education within training and workplaces to increase the likelihood that Māori feel welcome. Topics wāhine suggested included:

- Te reo Māori pronunciation
- Whānau, hapū and iwi dynamics and commitments / responsibilities
- Karakia selection and delivery (such as saying karakia in both te reo Māori and English)
- Tikanga.

In learning the above, wāhine hoped that the food and fibre sector would be more welcoming to Māori and understand that everyone comes from different contexts and that it is important to value this and get to know each person's background.

“I hear around the office people moaning like “oh this one's having days off to go to a tangi.” And I'm like “it's actually really important.” They may not be immediate family, but they might have really close ties to that person.”

“An employer should respect it all. And I mean that in terms of respecting that this person has their own set of values and they're bringing that with them to the job. And understanding what those mean...What one iwi has or values is different to the next iwi next door. Within an iwi, going onto one marae is different to the one next door. So what one brings from one iwi base can be quite different from the next person who walks in the door. So I think every employer needs to understand that's what is real and have a values approach to how they engage with that person.”

Genuinely involve Māori in training and employment

Wāhine Māori also described how it is essential that the food and fibre sector genuinely involves Māori, to ensure it is not a tick the box exercise and does not exacerbate existing biases. They discussed how “being Māori is political” and that the responsibility of being the person who brings the ‘diversity’ perspective to organisations and training is often unfairly put onto one person. The increasing desire to incorporate Māori into training and employment needs to be done in a way that “recognises Māori as

Māori” and genuinely wants to integrate Māori ways of working (such as incorporating more te reo, karakia, waiata and rōpu).

“The difficulty is that Māori see themselves as Māori and non-Māori want everyone to be included but don't recognise that Māori view themselves as Māori. If they can't do this then they will never all be able to work together.”

Costly training and time away from work reduces the accessibility of training

The **cost of training was described as a barrier** to making a pathway into the food and fibre sector accessible by 26% of women (8 out of 31). There were a range of specific financial barriers described:

- **Low return on investment / cost of being off farm / work:** women referred to whether the benefit of training outweighed the costs of the course, travel and time away from the farm and / or other jobs. If any of these three factors occurred, training felt inaccessible to women and was not worth their time and / or money.

“You need to really see a pay back for anything you do.”

- **Training fees:** women often described that they did not have the money for the training they wanted to do as they sometimes cost thousands of dollars.

“I looked at open polytechnic but because I'm earning an okay amount of money I'd have to contribute in cash to a lot of shorter programmes.”

Isolation creates a range of barriers to an accessible food and fibre pathway

Living in **isolated locations** was reported by over two-thirds of women (38%, 11 out of 29) as a **barrier to participating in training**. Specifically, women mentioned the time it takes to travel to the training while balancing children, other work, and the time cost of travelling long distances as challenges. For many women, online training alleviated some of these stressors. However, as detailed on page 25, women prefer a mix of online and face-to-face training, therefore fully transitioning all training online cannot be the only solution to this barrier.

“If [training is] online, it's a lot easier. If you have to drive somewhere, it adds extra time.”

Pathways need to account for the isolation women face and find ways to run training in rural centres.

Furthermore, over half of women (55%, 16 out of 29) said **isolation was a barrier to them finding a job**. The reasons were either that:

- **Poor internet connections and cell phone reception** affected remote working opportunities.
- **Jobs were often too far away** from where they lived meaning they wasted a significant amount of time each day in the car.

“You just lose so much time in the car, and we have poor cell phone reception so you can't even use that time in the car for something else.”

- Unpaid driving time, petrol and childcare costs that are required so women could go into an office made the **job not financially viable**.

“Location is a little bit difficult. A few good opportunities come up here and there but then I have to factor in hours of driving and petrol to get to the job. The hours I could be available, they had to be school hours.”

Key points to note:

- Training and job opportunities must be clearly promoted to women.
 - Within this, specific, clear benefits of training and the time commitments involved should be clearly communicated.
 - Jobs should be promoted on-the-ground in rural communities, this could either be achieved by leveraging off existing stakeholders / infrastructure or creating new dedicated hubs in all rural communities.
- Many women would benefit from jobs that suit their lifestyles by allowing for a flexible number of hours worked each week and online and remote work opportunities. To ensure wāhine Māori feel more welcomed and understood, genuine approaches to involving them and essential aspects of Māori culture must be embedded within pathways and the food and fibre sector.
- Training should find a balance between online and face-to-face sessions, making sure to schedule face-to-face training sessions well in advance. This approach allows women sufficient time to arrange the necessary support systems, such as childcare or work adjustments, to enable them to attend.
- Pathways to the food and fibre sector that support women need to consider the external barriers women face that prevent them from accessing employment such as looking after children and isolation. It is important to acknowledge that if they are not mitigated, women will remain less engaged in the Food and Fibre sector than they desire.

Women felt that for a pathway to be effective, there needs to be a shift in culture towards more acceptance of women within the food and fibre sector

Throughout their interviews, 45% of women (14 out of 31) felt that a culture shift needs to occur within the food and fibre sector to ensure:

- Women feel safe and supported to go down a pathway into the food and fibre workforce
- When women become part of the workforce they are valued and respected.

There are three layers to this, detailed in the accompanying infographic, which shows a woman needs to build her confidence and belief in her place in the food and fibre sector (see page 8), employers need to value women's skills instead of being put off by their gender, and the sector needs to recognise that women have a place within it. A pathway cannot be designed if the reasons why women are currently not engaged in the food and fibre sector are not addressed.



Women described the need for **better recognition and support of women working in the food and fibre sector** when it has historically been dominated by men. Women described facing a range of unconscious biases and stereotypes. Women often mentioned they have been called the 'farmer's wife', insinuating that they cook, clean and raise the children, doing the stereotypically female, support jobs within the family and are not an integral part of the workings of the farm. In reality, these women often fill multiple roles, that are integral to keeping the farm going.

"When people ask me what I do for a job - people don't understand when I say I'm on-farm. Now when I go to something and it asks me what I do for a job I put myself as 'farmer'. I didn't think I was a farmer, but you do all these things and everyone is just like "you're the farmer's wife." It's the stigma. There are a lot of women in the grind of young kids and development on their own farm. It would be nice to be recognised."

"Women need to be valued and value themselves for their ability to create astonishing contribution that nobody ever notices. In many cases, they are expected to be the one who manage the kids, manage the food, manage the house, probably manage the garden as well as the vegetables, plus probably the baby animals. That's probably their job. Plus, then there's the rest of the farm that they may be asked to take on as well. I think women need to be valued for their very great contribution. I think if they realised actually how valuable that was, then there would be no problems and barriers, and then getting into a job they'd go "look what I can do in a day before you even get up. You want me. You need me because I can do this."

"Women want to be involved, like we don't want to be left out...Gone are the days where we're sitting in the kitchen, making lunch - you can make your own lunch mate. I feel like gone are those days...We can do hard things too."

Women want to see increased representation in food and fibre sector activities and communications

13% of women (4 out of 31) felt it could be helpful for there to be greater recognition, communications and activities of women in the food and fibre sector to improve the culture and help overcome gendered barriers to entering the sector. This would help create a culture shift throughout both the food and fibre sector and the public. Women offered the following suggestions of what type of activities they would like to see:

- **Media channels** e.g., country calendar, sector websites
- **Case studies** that champion women having careers 'behind the farm gate'
- **Ladies' lunches** with inspiring guest speakers
- **Female-led farm training.**

An important consideration raised by one interviewee is ensuring pathways find a balance between women-only activities / events that give women the chance to connect and boost each other and not create an 'us and them' divide with men. They noted that running too many women-only events could be detrimental to increasing men's respect and recognition of women as leaders and equal contributors to the sector. By providing women with opportunities to be in training and social situations with men, it can help level the playing fields and encourage them to elevate women in the food and fibre sector.

"In a female only environment men don't learn that women have value. So, if you're in a room of men and you are there as their equals and there as their counterparts they see you as having value and therefore they will uplift you and support you and grow other women."

Rural women are highly valuable but often overlooked and under-utilised

Women often commented that they felt as though there was a group of highly skilled women sitting on farms across Aotearoa New Zealand who were not being utilised to their full potential by the food and fibre sector. As noted above, women commented that they need support to play a bigger role in the food and fibre sector.

"I think about New Zealand and I think that there is so much talent, capability and potential locked up in so many farms all over New Zealand because people feel remote or isolated or just don't know where to start."

"I've always felt like you know, there's so much untapped resource out there at home. Just people, women sitting at home that could do so much...It's just getting the opportunities."

There is not a lack of skills or willingness to engage with food and fibre employment— rural women are interested and motivated. Based on rural women's location they live and the responsibilities they hold, it is hard for them to engage with the food and fibre sector in the ways they would like. Therefore, creating pathways and incorporating mitigations to the barriers described above is worthwhile as the food and fibre sector has an incredible amount of untapped, skilled resources in Aotearoa New Zealand's rural women.

Regardless of how well a pathway is designed, it will be redundant if the food and fibre sector is not willing to deconstruct the existing biases women face.

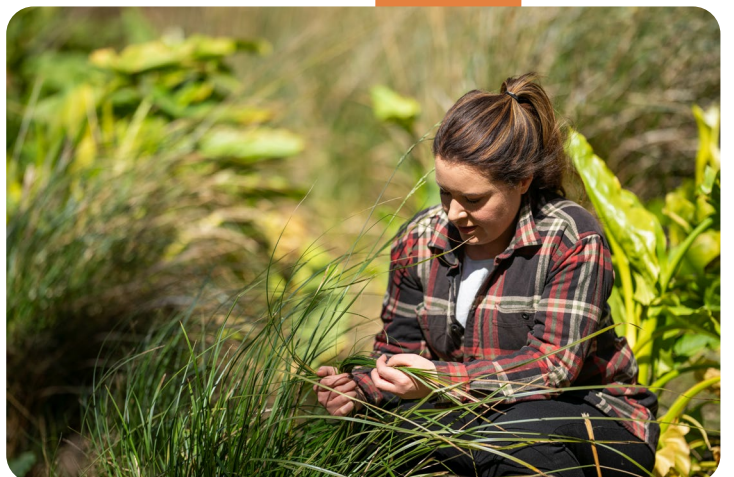
Key points to note:

- Women need to build their own confidence and belief in their place in the food and fibre sector, employers need to value women's skills instead of being put off by their gender, and the sector needs to recognise that women have a place within it.
- Encourage female representation within pathways by showing the sector and the public the range of ways women contribute to and are already an integral piece of the food and fibre sector.
- Ensure pathways create opportunities for women to connect and lift each other up, as well as chances for women to be in food and fibre training, employment and social setting with food and fibre men to help change their perceptions of women in the sector.
- Regardless of how well a pathway is designed, it will be redundant if the food and fibre sector is not willing to deconstruct the existing biases women face.

C

Recommended design principles

The following section presents the recommended principles to consider when designing pathways into the food and fibre sector workforce for rural women, as well as an example of how the principles could be applied in practice.



Recommended principles for designing workforce pathways for rural women

The following section summarises the findings from the interviews (presented earlier in this report) to create a series of key considerations necessary for developing an effective pathway into the food and fibre workforce for rural women. Generally, the recommended principles validate the findings to date from the market research survey, in particular:

1. There are a lot of very talented rural women who are underutilised by the sector. However, engaging this cohort of rural women will be very challenging as they aren't often engaging in community or professional channels, and the channels they do engage with are challenging to access.
2. There is a general lack of awareness of the workforce and training opportunities available in the sector, likely due to low confidence relating to where and how to start.

We have seen a change in the preferred pathways, however, with the interviewees indicating they would prefer a combination of formal training and formal recognition of prior learning (RPL) before entering the workforce, compared to entering the workforce immediately as the preferred pathway from the survey. The variance is likely due to a small sample size and indicates there is unlikely to be a preferred pathway as it depends on circumstances at the time.

Below, we build on the findings from the survey using the rich qualitative insights collected from the interviews to contextualise three commonly used principles of design – **visibility, suitability, and accessibility** – to the design of workforce pathways for rural women.

Before progressing, it is important to note here that the scope of this report is to develop principles to support the design of workforce pathways for rural women. While out of scope initially, it's important to consider what the interviewees raised about the need for better advocacy of rural women coming back into the workforce and the value they could add to a food and fibre business (i.e. a culture change). This should be considered a system challenge that could affect the success of the pathway. For example, a pathway could be designed well, but it will still fail if the sector's employers are subconsciously prejudiced against rural women in the workforce. While the women we interviewed felt this had improved significantly over several decades from the efforts of organisations across the sector³, there were still some barriers for women with particular characteristics (e.g. older in age).

Workforce pathways should be *visible*

Rural women need to be able to see the available workforce pathways before they can engage with any one of them. Improving the visibility of a pathway will mean promoting and advertising the opportunities through the appropriate channels to engage your target cohort. Promotion and advertising of the pathway will need to clearly outline how the pathway is beneficial to rural women and what the expected outcomes are.

In addition to the pathways themselves being visible, rural women need to see other rural women working in the sector and performing activities / different roles. This will help rural women become aware of the opportunities that may be available to them within their community. This could mean

³ Examples of groups supporting women advocacy include, but are not limited to, Dairy Women's Network, Meat Business Women, Wahine in Forestry, and Women of Aquaculture Aotearoa.

using photos and videos of rural women in appropriate promotional collateral and distributing them through the necessary channels. Other options include developing case studies and connecting with inspiring females in the sector. It's important to account for all considerations in this section when considering what is considered 'appropriate' or not.

Workforce pathways should be *suitable*

Rural women will only engage with a workforce pathway if it has been designed with their unique needs in mind – i.e. it has been designed suitably for their engagement. For a workforce pathway to be considered 'suitable':

- **The content must align with the needs of rural women.** Pathways should support women to build confidence to recognise their skills and value, identify employment opportunities, and understand the employment process before they are ready to look and apply for jobs. Women can be supported to build their confidence through:
 - **Networking opportunities** to connect with other rural women in their area with similar interests and aspirations toward the food and fibre sector workforce. Social opportunities and events can best be leveraged off existing organisations with established mana⁴ to reduce duplication and get more engagement. Rural women should be supported to create and maintain networks, and how these can be leveraged for professional development.
 - **Mentoring, coaching, and guidance** to support them:
 - Find what they are passionate about and would require from a job
 - Recognise and gain confidence in their skillsets
 - Understand how their skills and experience are relevant to the food and fibre sector
 - Promote themselves and communicate their skills and experiences with employers in a CV and during an interview
 - Build strategies to find appropriate jobs
 - Approach employers and respond to job advertisements
 - Stay mentally well during the process.

The content should clearly outline how to bridge the gap to employment with practical support, detailing the steps and training necessary to explore various employment opportunities.

- **Delivery of the pathway should suit the learning styles of rural women.** Pathways should be delivered by facilitators who rural women can relate to and be highly qualified in their areas of expertise. Ensure pathways are practical and demonstrate how the skills learned can be applied on-farm, throughout the job application process, and in employment settings.
- **The pathway should be delivered using an appropriate medium.** A mixture of online and face-to-face pathways works well for rural women. Having an online component enables greater

⁴ Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status,

efficiency and face-to-face enables connection with others and more hands-on practical experience.

- **Engagement with the pathway should be of an appropriate duration.** Pathways should be designed so they do not require a commitment that feels out of reach for women. If face-to-face engagement is required have a block of time so that women can fully engage in the face-to-face nature of the pathway and structure travel and other commitments around it. If a course is too spread out it will lose its momentum and engagement from women will decrease.
- **Engagement with the pathway should also be flexible.** Online delivery of the pathway should not be at one set time and should allow women to engage with it at a time at suits them, this could be overcome by giving multiple time options or offering a recording that women can watch at a time that suits them. Employers or trainers should be encouraged to allow women to work at night or not have to work a consistent number of hours each day but instead work towards a total number of hours each week.

Workforce pathways should be *accessible*

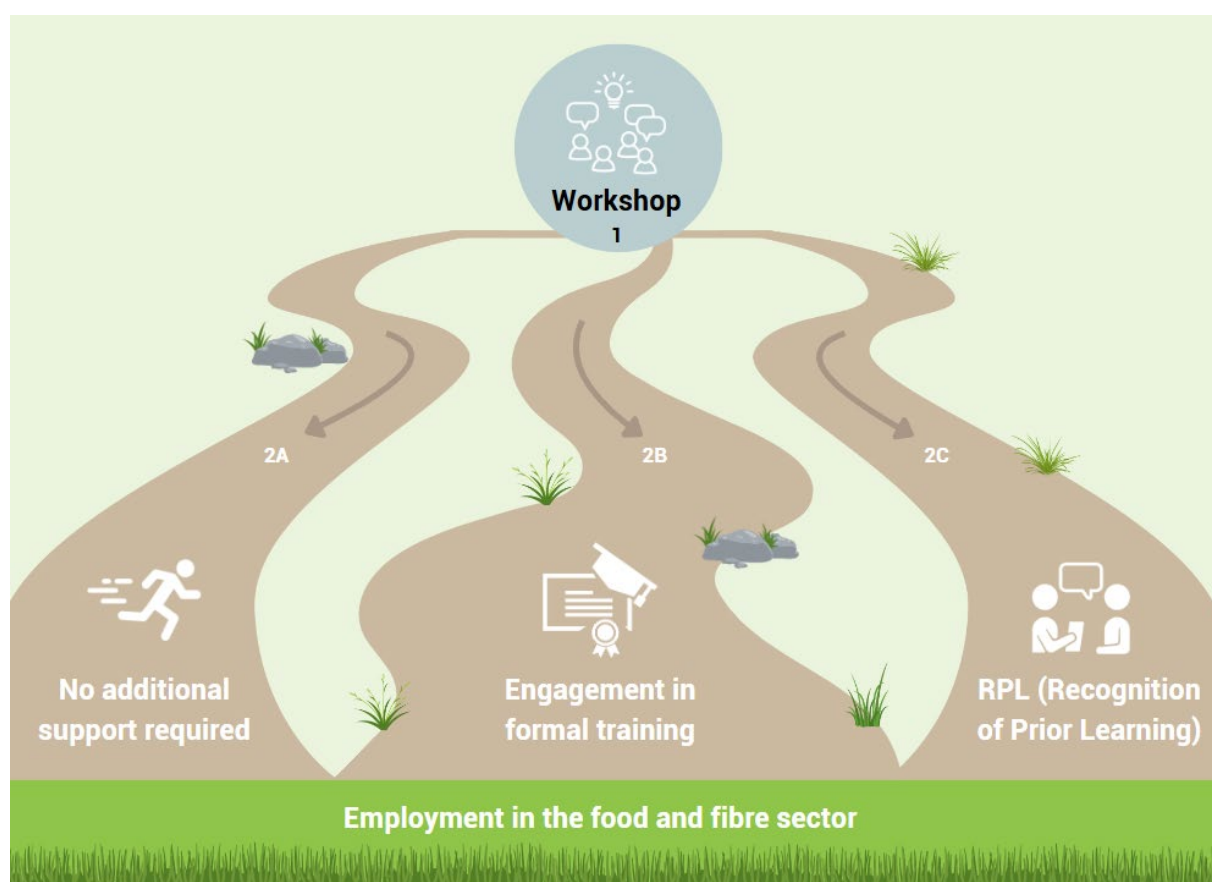
To create accessible pathways, training must be affordable and worth women's time, flexible childcare must be considered, and isolation must be accounted for. This could be achieved through the following:

- **The pathway should consider the commitments of women.** Training programmes and courses should be carried out during school hours and not key times on-farm e.g., when milking occurs. Training timings should be given to women well in advance, so they have enough time to put support in place to attend.
- **The pathway should account for the isolation of rural women.** Women are often prevented from engaging in pathways due to living in isolated locations that require high travel time to take part in training or employment. This could be accounted for by:
 - Providing *remote work and training opportunities* to give women the flexibility they need to still look after children (described above), fulfil any on-farm roles, and have a career.
 - Running *more training in smaller rural centres* to reduce travel time and time away from other priorities.
- **Engagement with the pathway should be financially feasible.** Engaging in employment or training requires women to invest time away from the farm and other commitments, as well as the cost of courses or training. Providing scholarships or subsidised / funded training will help women engage in training and progress their food and fibre careers.

Proposed pathway for rural women to enter the workforce

New Zealand's food and fibre sector has significant untapped potential to better utilise rural women in the workforce. Recognising the wealth of skills, knowledge, and unique experiences these women can contribute to the sector is essential. We have developed the following pathway as an example of how underutilised rural women could be better engaged and recruited into the workforce (Figure 11). The proposed pathway integrates the three principles outlined in the previous section. The example pathway is built using a two-step approach. Rural women start by engaging in a workshop to build their confidence and awareness of the employment landscape, then proceed down one of three pathways into the workforce depending on their preference. Each of the four numbered stages in Figure 11 are described below.

Figure 11: Example pathways into the food and fibre workforce for rural women



Step 1: Confidence development workshop

Most women interviewed lacked the confidence to engage with an employer or respond to a job advertisement in their current position. Therefore, the first step in this example pathway would be a workshop providing rural women the opportunity to:

1. Recognise and appreciate the core transferable (soft) and core technical skills they have developed from their previous employment and life experiences,
2. Learn how to communicate their skills and experiences with prospective employers verbally and in writing, (e.g. as a CV),

3. Develop strategies to find and identify appropriate employment opportunities that align with their circumstances (e.g. flexible hours) and skill set,
4. Learn tips and tricks for during the recruitment process including how to prepare and act during interviews, and how to negotiate job requirements,
5. Determine what their preferred pathway into the workforce is (see step 2).

The workshop could be packaged to be delivered online or face-to-face. While face-to-face is preferred to prioritise whakawhanaungatanga⁵, we expect delivering the workshop online may make the workshop more accessible to rural women who are geographically isolated (e.g. would otherwise need to commute) and need flexible access to work around their other priorities. To further accessibility, the workshop should be broken down into 3 – 4 bite-sized sessions delivered over several weeks to ensure each session can fit easier around their schedules. The workshops could be taken out to rural community centres to be delivered in person, although this would mean a significantly higher delivery cost.

Each session will be delivered by a tutor, although there could be an opportunity for the sources to be packaged as learning modules for women to work through in their own time, and at their own pace. However, at this stage, tutor-directed learning is likely to achieve the best results as the lack of confidence suggests rural women would benefit from the extra guidance. In this case, the tutor should be a woman in the food and fibre sector to help create a safe and supportive environment for their engagement.

To avoid any financial barriers to their engagement, the workshop could be developed as a formal micro-credential to access sustainable TEC funding to cover the costs of delivery and make the workshop free for rural women to participate in. The development of a micro-credential is relatively straightforward, although there are a few challenges with this approach for this context that are easily addressed, but are worth being aware of:

- The course will need to be formally structured to include a minimum of **50 learning hours** (i.e. level 5) split between tutor-directed learning time and self-directed learning time. The duration of the course (i.e. over which period the workshops are delivered) would need to consider the realistic number of hours rural women could commit to learning each week. For example, if this number was 5, then the workshops should be delivered over 10 weeks.
- The course will need to be **delivered by a registered provider** (e.g. a Private Training Establishment (PTE) or Industry Training Organisation (ITO)) to access TEC funding. Depending on the provider's capability and capacity, there could be an opportunity to subcontract the delivery of the course to a third-party organisation while enrolments and quality are managed by the provider.
- There would need to be a **formal assessment component** to demonstrate the rural women's understanding of the content delivered. An example of an assessment could be completing a formal CV.

⁵ Building relationships

Step 2: Preferred pathway into the workforce

Following completion of the workshop, rural women will be asked to identify which of the three pathways they would prefer to enter the food and fibre sector workforce via. Rural women will be supported into the pathway by the tutor in two one-on-one sessions after which point they will continue down the path themselves. The three pathway options are described below.

- A. No additional support.** The first option will be for those who finish the workshop with a high level of confidence about their skills and the recruitment process. These women will require no additional support following the workshop and consider themselves adequately prepared to engage employers or respond to a job advertisement. These women might be those who already have engaged with formal training before (i.e. they have a qualification to leverage) or they are naturally self-confident.

In this case, the tutor will not be required to have the one-on-one sessions unless rural women ask for it.

- B. Engagement in formal training.** The second option will be for those who finish the workshop but either feel:
- They don't yet have the skills that are valued by employers, or
 - They do have the skills employers value, but they are a bit 'rusty' and could use some improvement.

In either case, they would prefer to participate in formal training before approaching employers or responding to a job advertisement. The qualification achieved through training then becomes a tool rural women can use to communicate their capabilities with employers. For this pathway, the workshop tutor will support them to understand the skills they want to develop/refine and then the training options available to them. Once they complete the training, the rural women will be encouraged to approach employers directly.

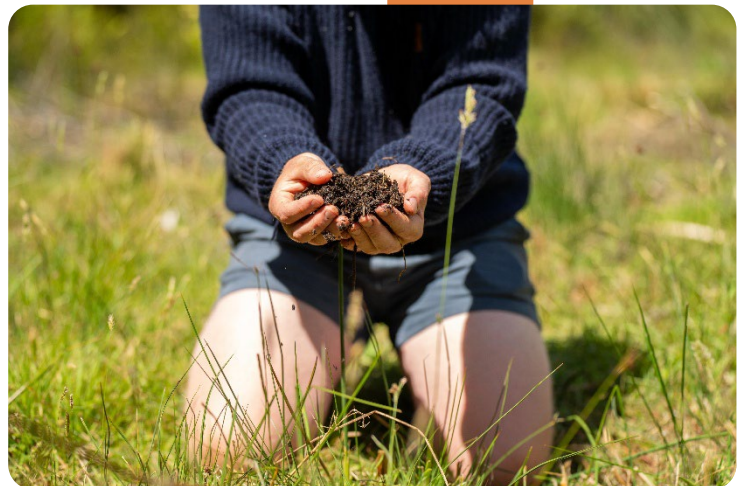
- C. Formal Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).** The third and final option will be for rural women who finish the programme but don't quite have the confidence to approach employers yet. They would instead prefer to have the skills they have developed informally (i.e. they don't already have a qualification) formally recognised without needing to participate in the training - this process is called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This would give rural women a qualification they can use to communicate their capabilities with employers in a much shorter period.

The issue with RPL is that it's a relatively expensive process and requires the qualification to have an RPL option which is not always the case. Therefore, this pathway would require significant development before it could be offered as an option, particularly given the diverse skill sets.

It's not clear from either the survey or the interviews, due to sample size, if there is a single most preferred pathway into employment for rural women. The survey suggested pathway A would be the preferred, while the interviews suggested some combination of pathway B and C would be the preferred. It is unlikely either of the pathways will be preferred significantly more than the other, and therefore they should be equally available for rural women to access.

D

Appendix



Appendix 1: Interview guide

Note, questions highlighted in light orange were additionally asked in wāhine Māori interviews.

Purpose	Questions
Introductions / rapport building	What does a typical day look like for you?
	What role does your whānau, (extended family) play in your daily life?
Employment situation and history	What's your current employment situation?
	How does your current work align with the values and cultural identity of your whānau?
<i>If currently employed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the work involve? (confirm industry) How long have you been doing that work? Is that full-time, part-time, or casual?
	<p>If part-time or casual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is that setup okay for you, or would you prefer to be working more than you are?
	<p><i>[If recently started working]</i> What allowed you to start working?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did your whānau support you in this transition?
	Does your workplace recognise and respect Māori culture and practices?
	Are there opportunities for you to use te reo Māori at work?
<i>If not currently employed</i>	<p>When were you last involved in employment – What type of work were you doing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time, casual, or full-time? What did it involve? (confirm industry) What prompted the change to your situation now? Would you like to start working in the food and fibre sector?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you experience any barriers because of your culture in your previous job?
Other work in food and fibre	Have you worked in any other food and fibre sectors?
Other work outside food and fibre	What other work have you done outside the food and fibre sector?
	Are you actively involved in your marae activities or in your iwi/hapū?
Transferable or soft skills	<p>So first want to talk about your transferable or soft skills. These are skills that can be used in different contexts, including outside the food and fibre sector, might be helpful in any role, and could be used outside of employment in other activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some of your transferrable or soft skills? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Teamwork Relating to people Problem solving Ability to learn new things Decision making Anything else?

Purpose	Questions
	<p>How did you build these skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training and qualifications? • On-the-job experience? • Unpaid work on the family farm or supporting your partner? • Volunteering at organisations / clubs or other work in the community?
Technical skills	<p>Next, technical skills. These are specific to the food and fibre sector or may even be specialised and industry specific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of your technical skills? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animals - Environment - Machinery - Technology - Best practice - Quality management - Legislations and regulations - Anything else?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any traditional skills or knowledge (e.g., mātauranga Māori) you have that you feel are valuable in the workplace?
	<p>How did you build these skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training and qualifications? • On-the-job experience? • Unpaid work on the family farm or supporting your partner? • Volunteering at organisations / clubs or other work in the community?
Barriers to employment	<p>Can you tell us about anything that's made it difficult for you to start working or find a job?</p>
	<p>Do you think Māori experience barriers at work such as cultural misunderstandings or lack of recognition of your qualifications?</p>
Employment support pathways	<p>We've got some options for different forms of support that could help you overcome those challenges. Out of these options, what would be the #1 form of support you'd most like to help you overcome challenges?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with building your CV / showcasing skills • Flexible childcare options • Transport options • Flexible work hours • Disability services • Coaching / mentoring (in-person and remotely) • Stable wifi access • Remote work opportunities • Online resources • Financial assistance
	<p>Would having Māori mentors or support networks in your workplace make a difference?</p>
	<p>Anything else that would make it easier for you to engage in work / employment?</p>

Purpose	Questions
Confidence	<p>On a scale from 0 – 10 with zero being not confident at all and 10 being extremely confident, how confident would you be submitting an application or reaching out to an employer about a job right now?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes you say that? • What would you need to move you from a ## to a 10
Barriers to participating in training	<p>Now we want to discuss training. Some women prefer to participate in training or have their previous training, experience and skills formally recognised (including working within your community or marae, recognised by future employers) before trying to engage with employment. Is that the case for you?</p> <p>[If important] Which would you rather, participate in new training or have your previous training, skills and experience recognised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this important for you before trying to engage with employment? <p>[If no – skip to Any other questions]</p>
If would like to engage in training / earning a qualification	What are some barriers to participating in training for you?
	Are there any Māori values or practices that you think should be better understood and respected by employers?
	How can employers or training providers better support Māori women in the workforce?
	What would help you overcome those challenges?
	<p>What types of training would work best for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face • Online • A mix of face-to-face and online • Hands-on and/ or on-the-job • Weekends, weeknights, weekdays during school hours
I prefer to have prior learning / experience recognised	<p>If you want your previous training, experience and skills recognised, what usually happens is you sit down with an assessor in a one-on-one review and they match your skills and experience with job qualifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you went through a process like this, what sort of support would you need? E.g. help to pull together experience, having a support person with you
Wrap up	What is the one thing that is most important for helping women enter employment in the food and fibre sector?
Any other feedback	Is there anything else you wanted to share with us that we haven't asked you about?

Appendix 2: Participant engagement and characteristics

Figure 12: Farm type (n=30)

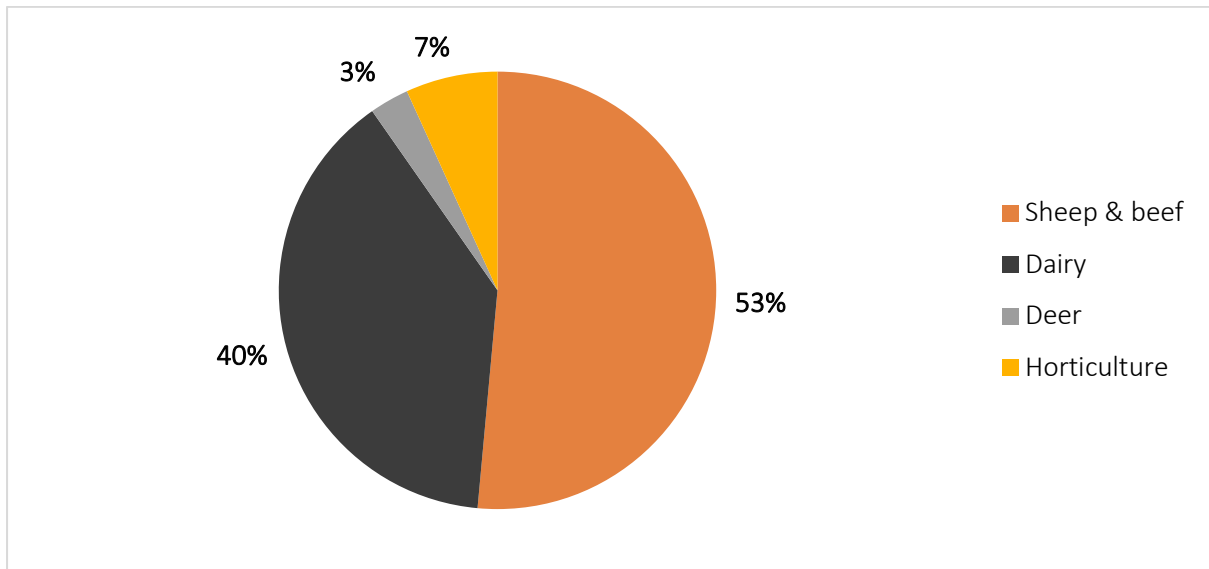


Figure 13: What does the employment involve (n=27)

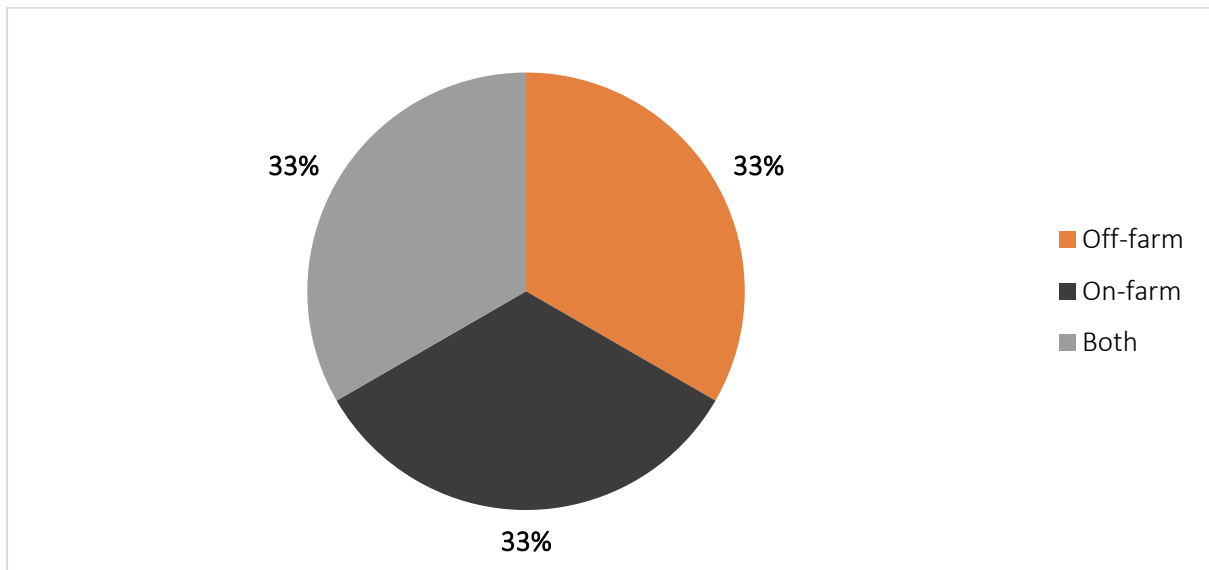


Figure 14: Tenure (n=16)

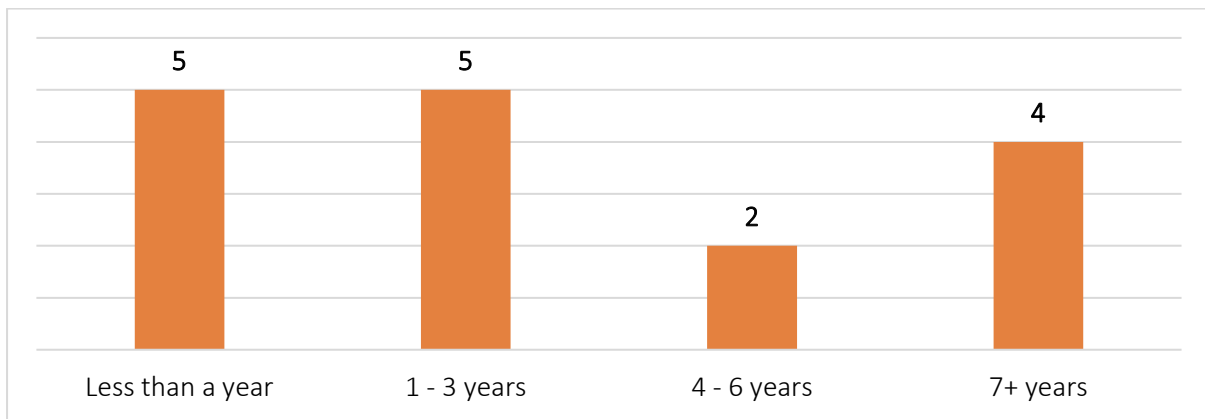


Figure 15: Is your current employment setup okay? (n=26)

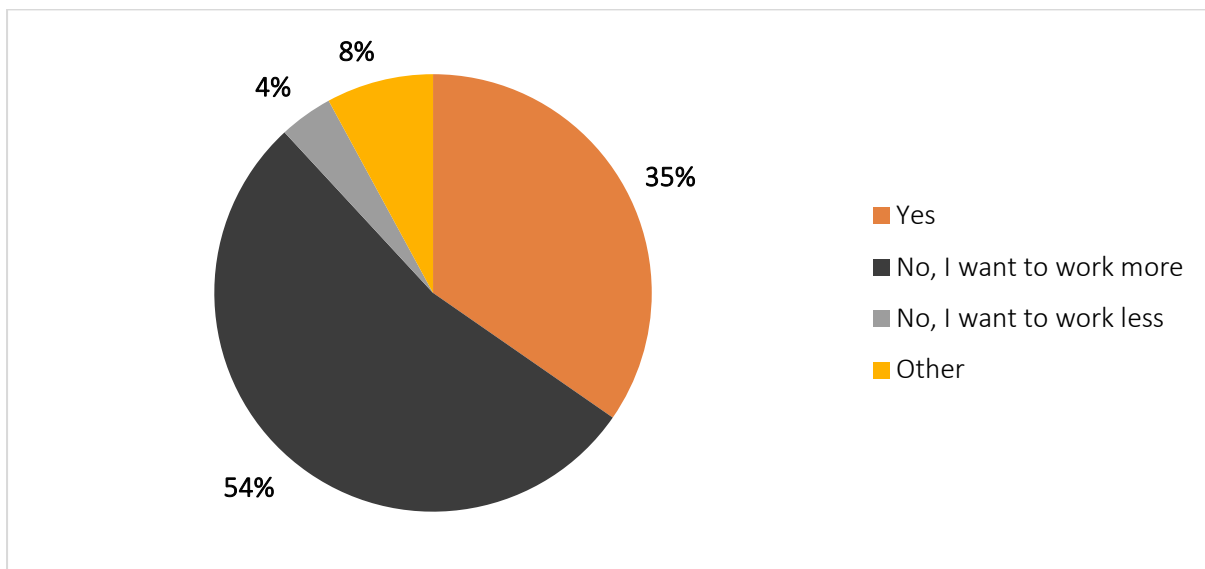


Figure 16: When were you last employed? (n=4)

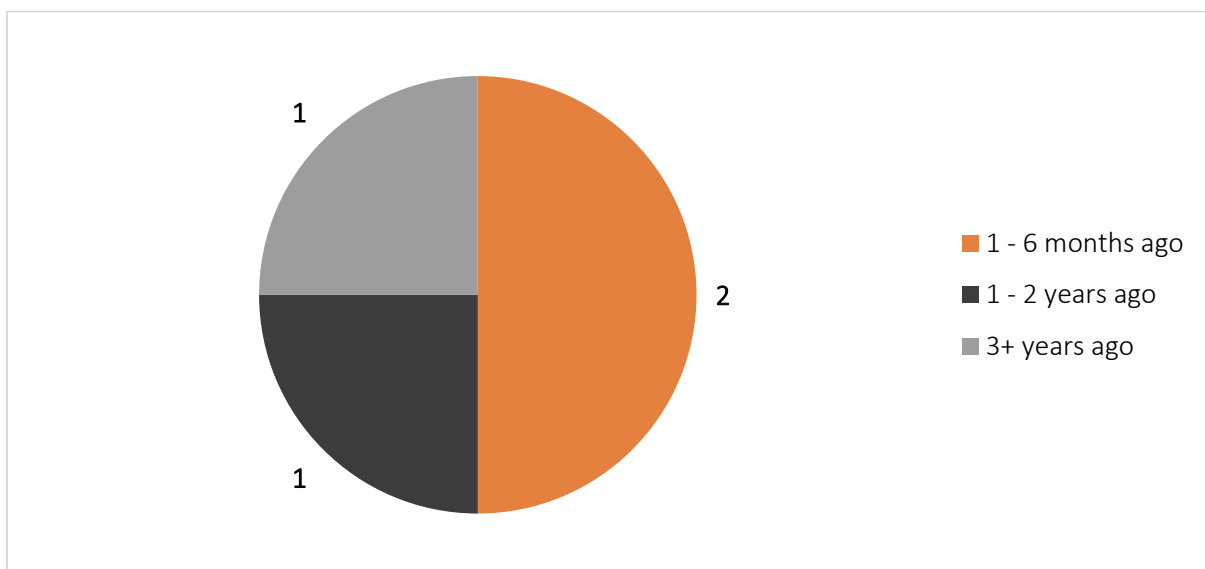


Figure 17: What type of work were you employed in? (n=4)

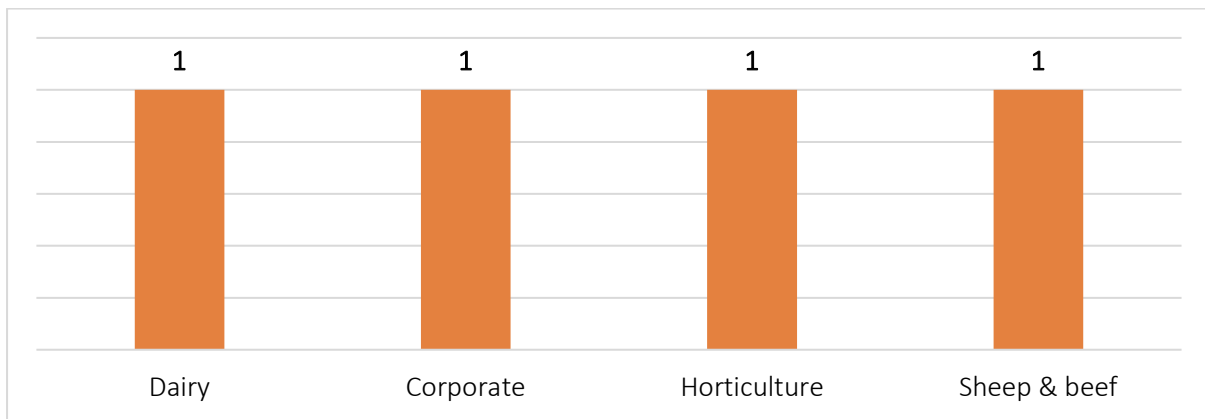


Figure 18: What changed that led to your unemployment? (n=4)

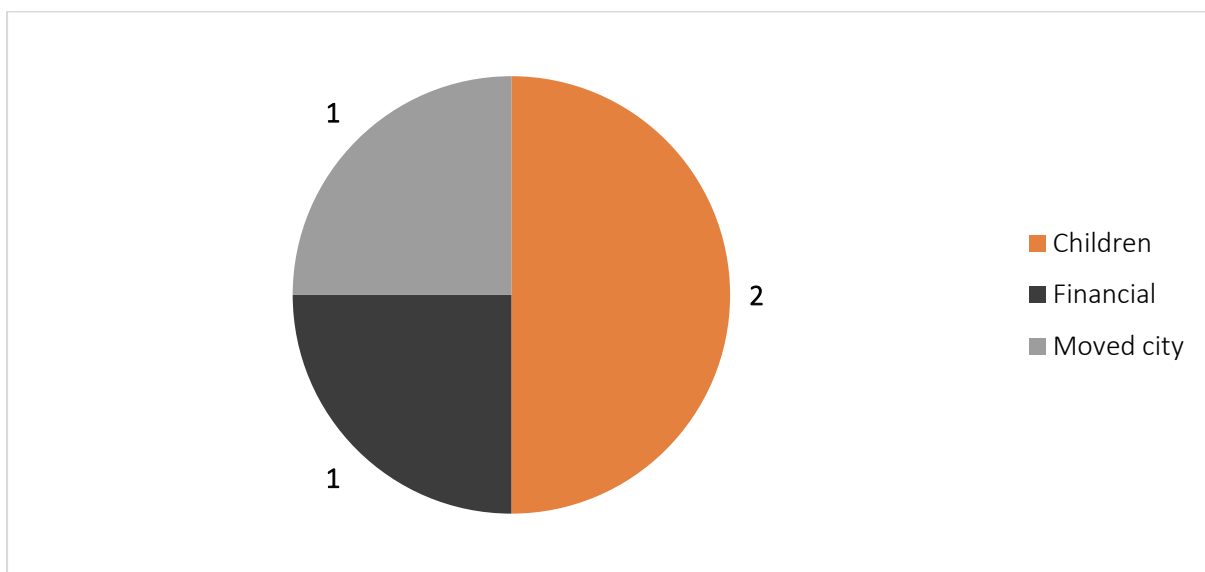


Figure 19: Do you want to start working in the food and fibre sector? (n=3)

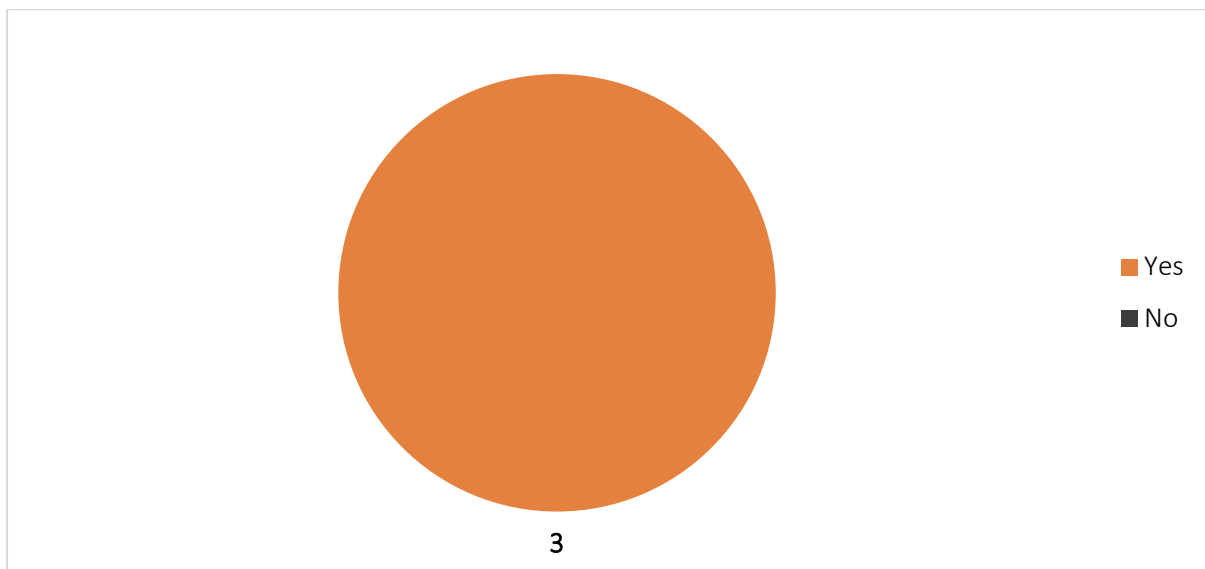


Figure 20: What other areas outside of the food and fibre sector have you worked or volunteered in? (n=29)

