

# Skills and Training for Māori Agribusiness

An update of Te Haumako Māori Workforce Development Plan and looking forward.



**MUKA TANGATA**  
People, Food and Fibre  
Workforce Development Council

**WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

**Information on our data:**

The data used on this report is sourced from Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). The IDI is a large research database containing microdata about people and households. Data is from a range of government agencies, Stats NZ surveys including the Census, and non-government organisations.

**Stats NZ disclaimer:**

The statistics mentioned in this report are not official. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which are carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>.

**Inland Revenue Department disclaimer:**

The results are based in part on tax data supplied by Inland Revenue to Stats NZ under the Tax Administration Act 1994 for statistical purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the IDI for statistical purposes, and is not related to the data's ability to support Inland Revenue's core operational requirements.

**Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi -**

With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive.

# Introduction

## Māori are big players in the food and fibre sector - as owners and workers.

### \$40 billion asset base

In 2023 the Māori asset base in the food and fibre sector was \$40 billion with exports of \$3 billion.<sup>1</sup>

### > 25% of the workforce

In key industries like fishing and forestry, Māori are more than a quarter of the workforce.<sup>2</sup>

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## Having staff with relevant qualifications leads to higher revenue and profitability<sup>3</sup>

For the Government to meet its Going for Growth target to double New Zealand's export earnings, having a skills and training system that suits those owners and workers is essential.

Since Muka Tangata was established as the Workforce Development Council for the People, Food and Fibre Sector in October 2021, we have incorporated ways to support Māori success into standard operational practices, new initiatives, and research projects.

This, alongside specific kaupapa Māori projects to respond to Māori ambitions, are outlined in [Te Haumako - Food and Fibre Sector Māori Workforce Development Plan](#)<sup>4</sup> released in August 2024.

Under the Government's changes Workforce Development Councils are being disestablished and will be replaced with Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) including one that is focused on the food and fibre sector.

ISBs will be industry-led and will reflect the needs and aspirations of their industries. As a significant and growing demographic within the sector, the wellbeing of Māori businesses, workers and learners will need to be a key focus.

The draft legislation covering ISBs maintains a commitment to honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi which should give the new ISB the confidence to continue to develop and implement solutions that will enable Māori to flourish.

This update of progress in implementing Te Haumako is to show Māori, government, and industry leaders how work started by Muka Tangata can continue to support growth in Māori agribusiness.

1 - Te Ōhanga Māori 2023. Includes food and fibre sector manufacturing exports, as covered by the industry division of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

2 - Data Source: Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure 2022

3 - Learner Pathways Research Summary (Muka Tangata 2024)

4 - Unless otherwise stated, references to the Food and Fibre sector in this document encompasses the [61 industries covered by Muka Tangata](#).

# Māori in the Food and Fibre Sector

## Owners<sup>5</sup>

In 2023, the Māori asset base in the food and fibre sector was nearly \$40 billion. This includes:

- sheep and beef farming (\$12.3b)
- dairy (\$11.8b)
- forestry (\$6.3b)
- fishing (3.1b)

The Māori contribution to GDP for the food and fibre sector was \$3.6b.

Māori exports were dominated by the primary sector (\$1.9billion) and manufacturing (\$1.9b). About \$1.1 billion from the manufacturing sector was related to the primary sector, including dairy and meat processing, other food manufacturing, as well as wood and paper manufacturing.

## Workers<sup>6</sup>

Māori workers formed approximately 16 percent of the food and fibre sector workforce since 2015, with some industries being especially high percentage. For example, in 2022, those who identified as Māori were:

- 30% of forestry workers<sup>7</sup>
- 26% of seafood workers
- 19% of sheep, beef, and deer farming workers

## Learners<sup>8</sup>

Over the period from 2017 to 2024, Māori learner enrolments in food and fibre sector qualifications reflected a steady presence across all learners, consistently making up around 23% to 25% of all enrolments.

The total number of Māori learners increased during the earlier years, followed by a gradual decline in recent years, mirroring a similar trend in total enrolments across the sector. In 2024, 4,525 Māori learners were enrolled, representing a quarter of all food and fibre learners.

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**Within 15 years, those with Māori whakapapa will be 25% of the Aotearoa New Zealand population aged between 15 and 39 years old.<sup>9</sup> Improving productivity in the food and fibre sector will need to attract, retain and upskill these potential workers and leaders.**

5 - Te Ōhanga Māori 2023.

6 - Data Source: Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure

7 - Forestry industry group is made up of Forestry, Logging, and Forestry Support Services industries.

8 - Data Source: Tertiary Education Commission database. For more information about TEC data, please visit Reporting and data collection | Tertiary Education Commission ([tec.govt.nz](https://tec.govt.nz))

9 - Stats New Zealand National Ethnic Population projections 2018

# About Te Haumako

**Te Haumako includes 19 ongoing actions covering work with Māori, industry, and government that fit within four broad areas of work:**

## 1 - Qualifications and training that work for Māori

## 2 - Support for ākonga Māori

## 3 - Māori leadership

## 4 - Promoting the industries and supporting pathways within them.

It draws on a significant body of research that points to the power of culturally appropriate education and training. It includes both actions that incorporate mātauranga and tirohanga Māori into all the work we do as well as specific initiatives to support Māori-led solutions.

In less than a year, significant progress has been made on most of the actions and resources and tools have been developed to influence change.

### Highlights:

- ◆ Developing guidance and resources, and workshopping to **upskill staff on how to incorporate mātauranga Māori in qualifications**. This learning has been used most recently to embed te ao Māori values into the qualification conditions for entry level qualifications. The learning will also be used to support the development of an optional strand for the level 3 and 4 Seafood qualifications.
- ◆ **Partnering with Whakatōhea to develop an iwitanga micro-credential** that provides a way for mātauranga belonging to iwi to be used in formal qualifications if the iwi or hapū wishes. We are currently exploring how this micro-credential can be used as an optional strand for the Level 2 entry level qualification.
- ◆ **Embedding Tirohanga Māori - [a guide](#) and seminars** give programme developers, tutors and assessors further clarity round what te ao Māori principles mean with respect to delivery in the food and fibre sector. It provides tangible examples of how they can, and are being applied within programmes.
- ◆ **The release of an online Māori leadership development tool - Tautoko Toolkit**. It offers a series of modules for emerging leaders to reflect on and develop their strengths and value. It is accompanied by a facilitator guide and pocket reference.
- ◆ **Ongoing discussions with ahuhenua trusts** that have operations in the food and fibre sector to support the development of [Workforce Development Plans](#) that support their aspirations. We are continuing to work on the online component of the planning tool, and will be seeking interest from businesses and trusts to trial the product over the coming months.

- **Tiaki Tangata – caring and looking after people.** We are shining a spotlight on how innovative Māori businesses are using te ao Māori values to support the workers in ways that encompass their emotional, mental and physical health. Their stories are published as a collective at [mukatangata.nz/tiaki-tangata](https://mukatangata.nz/tiaki-tangata) to inspire, encourage and give ideas to other workplaces who wish to create supportive and caring environments where workers feel valued and looked after.
- **We know many employers want to increase attraction and retention of Māori staff, and support them to upskill.** Lifting the cultural capability in workplaces is one way to help. We have created a [two-page fact sheet](#) that provides links to freely available tools, information and ideas to get those who are interested get started in making changes in their workplace.

Visit [mukatangata.workforceskills.nz/te-haumako](https://mukatangata.workforceskills.nz/te-haumako) for updates on our progress.

# Food and Fibre Capability Strategy

**The Food and Fibre Capability Strategy is being developed by Chief Executives of food and fibre sector organisations and supported by Muka Tangata.**

While it is being developed as a call for action for the whole sector, careful consideration has been taken to ensure that Māori needs are included in actions and recommendations. Thanks to all the Māori agribusiness leaders who have contributed to this. While this is not directly related to Te Haumako, it will guide future work for the food and fibre sector so it is essential that it complement Māori needs and aspirations.

The strategy acknowledges that the Government's Going for Growth agenda and goal to double export value by 2034 relies heavily on the food and fibre sector, which generates 81% of goods exports.

Achieving that goal demands more than increased output—it requires a skilled, adaptable workforce that can lift productivity, meet customer demands, and navigate a complex global trade environment.

Yet, employers are disengaging from formal education and training. This isn't because they no longer value capability development, but because the system has become unfit for purpose and current developments are likely to put further strain on the system.

The Strategy outlines ways to shift from a system that chases volume to one that generates value. This means identifying the capabilities that deliver the greatest returns, investing deliberately, and ensuring the vocational education and training system has the flexibility and tools to respond.

**The Strategy outlines actions that set a clear pathway towards a system that:**

- prioritises capability,
- invests for impact in productivity, and
- aims for a shared commitment - from government, providers, and industry.

The issues raised for the sector are shared by Māori. But the solutions must offer enough flexibility to incorporate the needs of Māori businesses, learners and workers to ensure that the growing Māori agribusiness can prosper.

Having staff with relevant qualifications is associated with higher revenue and profitability.

**If you wish to be kept updated on this work, please contact: [info@mukatangata.nz](mailto:info@mukatangata.nz)**



# Pā Harakeke - we are not alone

**Just as harakeke is stronger when it is planted with others, so too are the plans that are created with consideration to others.**

Muka Tangata has worked to ensure that our work both complements and informs other organisations that have an interest in uplifting skills to contribute to economic wellbeing.

Muka Tangata is being disestablished at the end of 2025 and will be replaced by an ISB with responsibility for the food and fibre sector. As such, we want to use this update of Te Haumako to:

- Enable the new ISB to continue the work so that Māori owners, workers, and learners in the food and fibre sector can continue to grow;
- Inform iwi, hapū and Māori agribusiness leaders of our work how they can use it to support their businesses and the wellbeing of their whānau;
- Give industries within the food and fibre sector information and tools that will strengthen their ability to work with whānau Māori;
- Support the Government's goals to improve productivity within the food and fibre sector and double export earnings.

## Hono ā-rorohiko - Links

**Muka Tangata has produced, or worked with others on, a number of tools and pieces of guidance to support workforce development in the food and fibre sector.**

- [Te Haumako](#) – our Food and Fibre Sector Māori Workforce Development Plan. Updates on how we are progressing are included on our website.
- [Te Mata Raraunga](#) – our Shared Data Platform brings together data and analysis on industries, workforces, and vocational education from across all the sectors the Workforce Development Councils represent.
- [Ngā Matapae](#) – our innovative Skills Forecasting Dashboard tool for the food and fibre sector. This microsimulation model allows us to compare how the food and fibre workforce and its skills profile are projected to evolve under different scenarios through to 2050.
- [Workforce Development Plans](#) – our workforce development plans website showcases latest updates and analysis on our industries. This includes new tools such as our Regional Economic Workforce Explorer which provides detailed data on food and fibre industries and workforces at a regional level.
- [Tautoko Toolkit](#) – a free online Māori leadership development tool. It offers a series of modules for emerging leaders to reflect on and develop their strengths and value. It is accompanied by a facilitator guide and pocket reference.
- [Whiria te Muka Tangata](#) – a literature review and scan of research into Māori educational success.
- [The Skills Framework](#) – a new skills framework that supports a radically simplified qualification structure, and will enable greater flexibility for learners and transferability of skills across industries in the food and fibre sector.
- [Embedding Tirohanga Māori](#) – the guide to give programme developers, tutors and assessors further clarity round what te ao Māori principles mean in respect of delivery in the food and fibre sector.
- [Attracting and Retaining Māori Staff](#) – a fact sheet to support employers to begin taking steps to increase their cultural capability, and better attract and retain Māori staff.

**For further information about anything in this document, please contact [maori@mukatangata.nz](mailto:maori@mukatangata.nz)**

