



New Zealand Pork Industry Board
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Shortages Review
Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
WELLINGTON
Via email: shortages.review@mbie.govt.nz

Dear Sirs

Pig Farmer occupations (121318) on the Immediate Skill Shortage List

Thank you for providing your proposal to amend the Pig Farmer occupations (121318) on the Immediate Skill Shortage List (ISSL) to NZPork for consultation with New Zealand pig farmers.

Background

NZPork (the operating name of the New Zealand Pork Industry Board) is the statutory farmer funded body set up to act in the interests of commercial pig farmers.

The New Zealand pig industry is a highly productive specialised livestock sector, well integrated within New Zealand's primary production economic base. Currently New Zealand's pig farmers produce around 45,350 tonnes of pig meat per year for New Zealand consumers. This represents around 42% of pig meat consumed by the domestic market, with the other 58% provided by imported pig meat from a range of countries.

Compared to the dairy, beef and sheep livestock sectors, pig farming is a 'niche' sector in New Zealand. Notably, pig meat production is concentrated on a very small number of farms compared to the dairy, beef and sheep livestock sectors: as at 2016, there are under 100 commercial farms in

New Zealand, with a commercial sow herd of around 28,000. As a guide, one stockperson is required per 100 sows, so the total labour force employed on New Zealand pig farms is about 300.

Unique characteristics of pig farming in New Zealand

Farming pigs is very different from farming other livestock. Pigs have a greater need for shelter and their social and dietary requirements are more complex than sheep and cattle. The modern pig has been selectively bred over a large number of years to produce high quality lean pork. These modern efficient pigs require specialist operators and specialist facilities to care for big litters from a large animal, and to manage a fast growing, lean meat producing animal, efficiently converting feed in an environmentally sustainable way. Animal care is a daily responsibility, as pigs are not like ruminants which derive their nutrition from grass: pigs are monogastric like humans and require a balanced diet fed daily. Expert stockmanship, with the knowledge and skills to provide for all aspects of animal care covering nutrition, health care, welfare, hygiene and provision of an appropriate environment is essential. Specialist skilled care is required at all stages of production from the time the piglets are new born until they reach market weight. In addition, staff with the appropriate husbandry and management skills are required for the breeding herd, to ensure that the farm is highly productive and all animals are well cared for.

Another unique characteristic of the New Zealand pork industry is that farms are very diverse in their operation. For example, New Zealand's temperate climate means that it is suited to outdoor breeding and 40% of the sow herd is farmed outdoors.

Farm size also varies greatly. While the average farm is around 400 sows (about 4000 pigs) operating with 4 staff, farms vary from owner operator supported by another employee, to the largest farm having around 5000 sows (50,000 pigs) and employing around 50 staff. Many farms have their own systems that have been developed to suit their land type, scale, availability of technology and markets (customers). These systems require those who come into the farm to be comfortable working in a team environment as well as having existing stock/machinery skills and a positive attitude towards health and safety.

Despite the variation in farm size, the same technical skills are required across farms, all operating on a regular (often weekly) production cycle with births, weanings, matings and sales occurring all year around. Ninety percent of farms use artificial insemination, where on-farm staff inseminate a cohort of sows regularly (many weekly). Some farms and breeding units will be collecting and processing semen prior to inseminating sows.

Pig farms in general are structured into five areas of operation.

These are:

- Mating, gestating (pregnant) sows and replacement stock facility
- Farrowing facility with lactating sows and newly born piglets
- Nursery facility where newly weaned pigs are cared for
- Growing and finishing facility
- Feed preparation and distribution facility

All of these areas require staff with specialist skills and knowledge.

On smaller farms the 'pig farmer' role requires the person to operate in all areas of the farm, including to provide for 7 day a week coverage. As the farms grow in size the 'pig farmer' role may

specialise more in one of the five main facilities on the farm and may operate as part of or manage a 'team' in that area.

Because of the level of technology used on pig farms, including systems such as computer controlled feeding and electronic sow feeders, computer skills are essential. In addition, pig farms operate extensive computer recording packages as part of the precision farming, monitoring and accurate management data required to maintain a successful pig farming business. The level of regulatory and compliance requirements in both the environmental and welfare areas are continually being stepped up and farm staff need to be skilled in these fields as well, for the business to remain financially viable in a sustainable manner.

In New Zealand, pig farming is a very small industry compared to other countries. There is not a large pool of specialist 'home grown' pig farmers in the work force who are likely to be requiring employment. Similarly there is not the specialist personnel readily available in New Zealand to provide specialist 'on the job' training or supervision, particularly on smaller farms. The ability to employ specialist pig farming staff with the correct technical and husbandry skills and knowledge is essential if New Zealand pig farmers are to remain economically viable in the face of high levels of imported pig meat.

In contrast, other countries such as the Philippines and some European countries have significant pig farming sectors and therefore potential to train staff in stockmanship skills and to the high technical level required on New Zealand pig farms. The lack of tertiary training specifically aimed at the industry and the smallness of the industry can be a limitation to a farm's ability to source young eager farmers at a graduate level which is the approach often taken in the dairy sector.

All in all, it is the combination of specialist skills required, that are not readily available and exchangeable with other types of livestock farming, plus the small number of pig farms in New Zealand, that defines a unique set of circumstances for the supply of an appropriate skilled labour force for pig farming in New Zealand.

Requests for Pig Farmer occupations (121318) on the Immediate Skill Shortage List

- We endorse the retention of Pig Farmer on the ISSL list.
- However, with the increasing complexity of pig farming, the range of farm sizes, including the increase in scale of larger pork production units, there is an ongoing critical need to obtain, train and retain good staff for all levels of pig farming. Given the industry size, very modest numbers are required compared to the numbers required by Dairy and Beef farmers. A single occupational classification is inappropriate to cover the range of job scope plus salary level required across the industry: from that required on a small farm working alongside the owner / operator as a skilled stockperson providing appropriately knowledgeable and experienced input across all areas of the farm to ensure its 7-day a week operation; to that required on a large farm, where the role demands appropriately knowledgeable and experienced stockpersons to manage an operating area of the farm, or the overall farm, including the team of stockpersons in that operating area. These larger farms have also highlighted their need to source skilled stockpersons within each team – and the lack of availability of such persons in New Zealand.
- A single occupational classification is inappropriate because the range of person required varies from a skilled stockperson to a skilled stockperson with staff management and

business management responsibility. A 'one size fits all' approach would not work for a 'job description' or salary scale.

- Therefore we request that this occupation be further qualified or clarified to embrace the occupations of Pig Farm Manager/Assistant Farm Manager/Unit Manager, and Skilled Stockman.

We have outlined the roles of such occupations below to illustrate the expertise required, and importantly the varying expertise and requirements in such levels:

Skilled Stockperson

This will be a person with more than 2 years on farm experience plus some formal training. They may be a section head in charge of the farrowing, mating or grower area. Duties include organising day to day care of pigs and supervision of stock people. Data input is a key role. The actual work undertaken will depend to some degree on the size of unit. General duties include stock work feeding, cleaning or maintaining the outdoor environment of the pigs and will vary during the week depending to what is happening on farm. On larger units with more than 300 sows, staff tend to specialise in one area of operation. This role requires some leadership skills and sound knowledge of pork production practices. Their day to day work roles and duties performed are likely to include:

- **Farrowing facility:** involved with the day to day care of lactating sows and piglets. Duties may include health management, feeding, cleaning, data collection, monitoring the environment, performing routine husbandry treatments on sows and piglets and other duties as required. Requirement for good observation skills and a knowledge of sow and piglet behaviour.
- **Mating/ Dry Sow facility:** involved in the day to day care and management of dry sows, boars, and replacements in the mating area. Duties include feeding, cleaning, health care, recording of data and assisting in mating and artificial insemination. Assist with replacement stock, monitor the environment, handle sows and boars, perform pregnancy tests, use identification system, monitor stock condition and other duties as required. Requirement for good observation skills and a knowledge of pig courtship and mating behaviour.
- **Weaner/Grower Facility:** involved with the day to day care, well-being and management of weaner and grower pigs. Duties include feeding, cleaning, health and environment monitoring, data collection, sorting, transfer and loading pigs. There is a requirement for good observation skills and being able to undertake facility maintenance.
- **Feed preparation facility:** on larger units the stockperson may be in a support role to the above or operating in a mixture of the above roles depending on the weekly work load. In addition the stockperson may be required to undertake duties in feed preparation, repairs and maintenance and other 'go for' duties as requested.
- **Weekend Work:** in general a roster will be set up on farm requiring work on weekends and public holidays.

Assistant Farm Manager/Pig Farm Manager / Unit Manager

The Assistant Farm Manager is a person with day to day responsibility for the operations of the farm. The duties include day to day organisation and management of staff, ordering feed, freight and arranging sale of pigs. Analysis and interpretation of performance data is a key role. In addition the stock manager will have an 'active' role in the day to day working across all areas of farm operation (as described in the skilled stockperson role above), assisting in areas of peak work load, filling in when staff are absent. This person reports directly to the owner or manager. Knowledge of

environmental management, welfare, and health and safety issues is an asset. The size of the operation will determine the amount of day to day 'hands on' involvement.

For smaller farms the Pig Farm Manager may be responsible for the operations of the farm as covered above and report directly to the farm owner.

The Unit Manager is a person responsible for all aspects of running the operating unit on a day to day basis as well as long term planning. The Unit Manager may have a team of 3 – 5 staff to manage and ensure that all practices and policies are adhered to. They would take responsibility for performance/production in the Unit and staff development and training. Requirements for this role include experience in facility and staff supervision, pork production management and husbandry, and data collection and monitoring. The Unit Manager will report to the owner or manager. The size of the operation will determine the amount of day to day 'hands on' involvement. Knowledge of environmental management, welfare, and health and safety issues is an asset.

- We believe that Assistant Farm Manager/Pig Farm Manager /Unit Manager can be appropriately scoped as an occupational category under one title to allow flexibility to source skilled and experienced staff with both skilled stockmanship qualifications and experience but also the level of managerial qualities appropriate to the scale of operation. The salary range for this occupational category will be greater than that offered for a skilled stockman.
- We request that the requirements, viz.
One of the following qualifications:
 - *National Certificate in Pork Production (Husbandry) (NZQA Level 4)*
 - *National Certificate in Pork Production (Management)()* (NZQA - Level 4)

AND

a minimum of two years' relevant on-farm work experience

specifically state: **or equivalent qualification.**

This is because these qualifications are New Zealand-based ones.

- Importantly we point out that employing a migrant under a work visa policy has a very significant drawback if it requires annual renewal. While this is a considerable drawback for employing and settling a Skilled Stockperson it is an additional impediment for considering placing a person in a farm management / assistant management /unit management role where reasonable certainty of tenure is important.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to review MBIE's proposed changes to Pig Farmer occupations on the ESSL, based on feedback from New Zealand's commercial pig farmers.

We emphasise that given the small number of commercial pig farms (currently under 100) the total likely demand for employees sourced from the ESSL will be modest – but crucial to ensure the sustainability of New Zealand pig farming.

We also emphasise that the expertise required for pig farming is specialist compared to the low level of requirements sought by Beef and Dairy farmers. Such expertise is not readily available in New Zealand nor is there a pool of specialists for 'on the job' training.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with MBIE to scope specific requirements for each of these two occupational categories to ensure a good fit for the types of employees not available within the New Zealand labour market.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Clement". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Frances" and the last name "Clement" clearly distinguishable.

Frances Clement
Policy and Issues Manager