

Australian Pork Limited

AUSTRALIAN
Pork™

Updating ANZSCO Agriculture Occupations

June 2021



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Executive Summary

The Australian pork industry faces significant difficulties attracting and retaining labour due to the need for an increasingly skilled workforce. Labour supply deficits have primarily been caused by poor social perceptions of the industry, dominated by ill-conceived notions that a career in the industry is unrewarding, non-technical, and one with limited pathways for career development. However, given the increasingly technical and integrated nature of the pork supply chain, this view simply does not reflect the reality of the modern Australian pork industry.

Under the current Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), most occupations within the pork industry are identified as either 'Livestock Farmer' (skill level 1 - usually the farm owner/manager) or 'Livestock Farm Worker' (skill level 5 – usually an entry level position) with almost no representation of occupations with skill levels in between. Workers in the pork industry often enter without recognised qualifications and develop a range of skills 'on-the-job', which are not recognised through the current ANZSCO system. As a result, they fall into lower skill levels under the ANZSCO system (mostly skill level 5). This is not only irreflective of the actual skillsets of the Australian pork industry, but impedes the accurate capture of data used to support government policy, regulatory, and budget decision making. This in turn affects the perception and understanding of the needs of the pork industry, affecting industry's ability to engage workforce and the resources to alleviate workforce shortages.

It is important that the ANZSCO system adequately represents the occupations and skills within the pork industry to enable the accurate collection of data to drive government policy and budget decisions and ensure industry is supported to alleviate workforce shortages. To achieve this, APL proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Replace the current ANZSCO system with an accurate and flexible occupations framework which can adequately reflect the skillsets of agricultural workers.

Recommendation 2 - Amend the current ANZSCO occupations lists under sub-major groups 36 and 84 to include 'Skilled Piggery Stockperson' and 'Piggery Worker', as outlined in Appendix A and B.

Supported by the above amendments to create an accurate and flexible, ANZSCO system, APL provides the following additional recommendations to support workforce enhancements:

Recommendation 3 - Government and the industries to commit to implement and review the National Agricultural Workforce Strategy, underpinned by an annual national labour and skills survey to support decision making.

Recommendation 4 – Ensure that agricultural students can access affordable online training regardless of their geographical location through continued investment in regional communications infrastructure and implementation of consistent training and skilling subsidies at a state and territory level.

Recommendation 5 - Government create a nationally recognised agricultural 'trade-equivalent' job brand to recognise the skill set of agricultural workers, professionalise a career in agriculture and assist skills transfers across agricultural industries.

Recommendation 6 – All levels of government support ongoing investment in Agricultural Labour Hubs in rural and regional Australia to connect employees with agricultural employers.

Recommendation 7 - Government work with the agricultural industries to update the national primary and secondary curriculums to reflect the essential nature of Australian agriculture and build greater awareness amongst school students to assist the development of a workforce pipeline.

Australian Pork Limited

Australian Pork Limited (APL) is the peak national representative body for Australian pig producers. It is a producer owned company combining marketing, export development, research and innovation and strategic policy development to assist in securing a profitable and sustainable future for the Australian pork industry. The Australian pork industry employs more than 36,000 people in Australia and contributes \$5.3 billion in gross domestic product to the Australian economy.

APL welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the 'Have your say on the Updating ANZSCO agriculture occupations'.

The Current Pork Industry Workforce

The Australian pork industry is diverse in terms of location, scale, ownership, and method of production. Combined with gradual consolidation of the industry over the past two decades, many piggeries now demand specialist skills within their workforce.

Corporately owned and large-scale privately owned ("family corporate") piggeries represent a large proportion of the production and employee numbers in the industry. The needs of these larger piggeries are quite different to those of smaller privately owned piggeries ("family farms"). In particular, larger piggeries may need to manage a larger workforce, potentially across multiple sites. Similarly, there are differences in the technical and production skills required of the workforce depending on the type of production system (e.g. indoor, outdoor, and free-range piggeries).

Globally, the Australian pork industry is small but is at the forefront of science, sustainability, and social responsibility. As pig production systems become more sophisticated, driven by technological advancement, the roles of the workers in the industry evolve. The modern Australian pork industry is a highly technical, specialised, and dynamic industry which relies on a highly skilled workforce. Particularly, Australian pig production now requires suitably skilled people who must be responsible for managing nutritionally balanced feed operations, monitoring growth, performing artificial insemination operations, and monitoring animal health and behaviour.

Thus, the industry has a high demand for skilled, experienced labour and, at the very least, all stockpersons working with pigs must have appropriate training to ensure compliance with state animal welfare legislation. A stockperson is considered suitably qualified if they are a veterinarian, hold a Certificate III in Agriculture (Pork Production) or equivalent, or have completed assessment by a Registered Training Organisation in:

- the movement and handling of pigs;
- care for the health and welfare of pigs;
- compliance with industry animal welfare requirements;
- administration of medication to livestock.

Unfortunately, appropriately skilled workers who are available for employment in the Australian pig industry are difficult or impossible to source locally. The pork industry has suffered ongoing difficulties in sourcing skilled piggery workers.

Consultation to support the development of the *2020-21 APL Workforce Strategy (Workforce Strategy)* resulted in 74% of respondents indicating that labour and skill gaps were their main workforce issues. Engagement also highlighted that despite significant efforts, they struggle to find enough local people to employ, particularly with the appropriate interest, attitude and skills. Having the right attitude and interest was considered of great importance, and most producers would readily employ local people and support them with training, if these criteria were met.

Engagement with producers confirmed the main factors impacting on attraction of new candidates (in order of significance) were the following:

1. Image or perception of the industry
2. Lack of understanding and promotion of agriculture in the education sector
3. Strong competition from other industry sectors
4. Perception of low pay rates
5. Lack of awareness of career opportunities
6. Unfavourable working hours

Specific Recommendations

1.1 Core Questions

1) Are there agricultural sector occupations currently included in ANZSCO that are not accurately described? For each occupation, please propose a new title and/or definition for the occupation, including any changes to alternative titles, specialisations, licencing, or registration requirements.

Under the current ANZSCO, piggery worker is listed under 'Livestock Farm Workers nec' (841599). This does not accurately describe the tasks undertaken by a piggery worker and, as such, APL proposes the inclusion of a new occupation under Unit Group 8415 Livestock Farm Workers, called 'Piggery Worker' (841518). The new occupation of 'Piggery Worker' would be a skill level 4 and the description would be as follows:

Assists with routine tasks on a pig farm such as breeding, farrowing, raising, feeding and animal husbandry.

A more detailed breakdown of the ANZSCO framework to include this new occupation can be found at [Appendix A](#).

The occupation 'Pig Farmer' (121318) is accurately described within the current ANZSCO and does not require any amendments.

2) Are there agricultural sector occupations in ANZSCO that do not accurately reflect the occupation's skill level? For each relevant occupation:

- a) Outline the skill level (1-5) that should be applied to the occupation.
- b) Detail why the change in skill level is justified. For example, have the education or training requirements or licensing requirements changed?
- c) Describe how the inaccurate skill level impacts your industry, sector or business.

Occupations within the current ANZSCO accurately reflect the skill level required for farm owner/manager, identified as 'Livestock Farmer' (skill level 1).

With the inclusion of the new occupations, Skilled Piggery Stockperson (skill level 3) and 'Piggery Worker' (skill level 4) the new ANZSCO will accurately cover the breadth of skills within the pork industry.

3) Are there occupations in your industry, sector or business that should be separately identified in ANZSCO? For each occupation:

- a) Describe the occupation, the tasks involved; relationship to other occupations; any registration or licensing requirements and education and experience requirements; and skill level (1 to 5).
- b) Indicate the number of people that undertake the occupation in your industry, sector or business.
- c) Outline how you currently classify this occupation using the existing ANZSCO occupation classifications.
- d) Consider if adding this occupation as a specialisation to an existing ANZSCO occupation category would meet the needs of your industry, sector or business.
- e) Explain how the omission of the occupation as a separate category in ANZSCO impacts your industry, sector or business.

a.) The modern Australian pork industry is a highly technical, specialised, and dynamic industry which relies on a highly skilled workforce. Australian pig production now requires suitably skilled people who must be responsible for managing nutritionally balanced feed operations, monitoring growth, performing artificial insemination operations, and monitoring animal health and behaviour.

Thus, the industry has a high demand for skilled, experienced labour and, at the very least, all stockpersons working with pigs must have appropriate training to ensure compliance with state animal welfare legislation. A stockperson is considered suitably qualified if they are a veterinarian (Skill level 2), hold a Certificate III in Pork Production or equivalent, or have completed assessment by a Registered Training Organisation in:

- the movement and handling of pigs;
- care for the health and welfare of pigs;
- compliance with industry animal welfare requirements;
- administration of medication to livestock.

In addition to the employment of Australian workers by the pork industry, overseas workers are sponsored through the Pork Industry Labour Agreement (PILA), as 'Senior Stockperson (Piggery)'. There is currently no ANZSCO code for the occupation of 'Skilled Piggery Stockperson' and as such, the establishment of the PILA provided sponsors in the industry the ability to hire workers from overseas under an occupational description that more accurately reflected the duties that were required.

To enable the proper capture of skill levels that are truly present within the pork industry and support not only skilled migration but domestic workforce, a separate occupation is required to represent the 'Skilled Piggery Stockperson' position with a skill level 3 under Minor group 363 Skilled Livestock Workers. A detailed breakdown of the proposed ANZSCO framework for the occupation of 'Skilled Piggery Stockperson' can be found at [Appendix B](#).

The tasks of a Skilled Piggery Stockperson would align to those under the PILA. These are detailed below:

- supervise the site and facilities in terms of the required human resources, physical resources, safety requirements, consumables, documentation and measurement devices;
- provide overall maintenance and compliance of the Company Quality Assurance program for the site ensuring that all relevant documentation is kept current;
- supervise data collection and recording so information is accurate to aid stock and inventory control;
- undertake specific tasks assigned by management to ensure that environmental, quality and safety goals are met;
- implement preventable maintenance programs to reduce planned and unplanned down time;
- supervise trial sheds, collect and record data in accordance with trial protocols;
- selection of breeding stock and/or pigs for sale;

- supervision and participation of daily inspection of livestock, such that the animals are appropriately fed, watered, environmental parameters are fulfilled. The Skilled Piggery Stockperson in this case would work with and supervise a less experienced Stockperson;
- supervision and participation of daily inspection of livestock, ensuring compromised animals are individually assessed, identified, treated and record in accordance with the Company Herd Health Plan and the industries Model Code of Practice;
- euthanise sick or injured stock in a humane manner and in accordance with the Model Code of Practice for Animal Welfare – Pigs 3rd edition;
- conduct post-mortem examinations of deceased stock and report findings;
- collect boar semen at an artificial insemination laboratory;
- undertake processing duties within the artificial insemination laboratory;
- supervision and participation in the mating of animals via individually supervised mating or through Artificial Insemination;
- supervision of the birthing process, including the ability to physically conduct unsupervised internal assessments of females during parturition to minimise this incidence of still births;
- participate in company/industry training sessions and workshops as required;
- perform any other duty as required by the Unit Manager.

b.) It is quite challenging to define how many people across Australia are employed in the role of a Skilled Piggery Stockperson within the pork industry, as this is not captured within the ANZSCO and therefore not accurately captured by the Census.

The table below shows the number of enrolments in pork production courses between 2015 and 2019. The Diploma, which is intended for the occupation ‘Pig Farmer’ (ANZSCO: 121318, skill level 1), has extremely few enrolments. Whereas, the Certificate III in Pork Production, intended for the new occupation ‘Skilled Piggery Stockperson’ (skill level 3) has relatively steady and healthy enrolments.

Table 1 Qualification enrolments in pork production courses by

| Qualification | Qualification Enrolments by Year | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
| Certificate III in Pork Production | 287 | 213 | 191 | 164 | 215 |
| Diploma of Pork Production | 2 | 5 | 13 | 6 | 1 |

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA Program Enrolments, 2015-2019

The spread of enrolments across the two qualifications is reflective of the structure of a piggery; where the number of people in management is fewer than the number employed in more hands-on roles like a stockperson. It could be assumed that those undertaking the Certificate III are either employed by or looking for employment within the pork industry. Based on this the number of Australian-born workers employed as Skilled Piggery Stockperson is significant.

To get a representation of the number of migrant workers employed as Skilled Piggery Stockperson, we can look at the number of employers utilising arrangements under the PILA. Skilled overseas workers have played a significant role in addressing both the skill and labour gaps experienced by industry over the past 10-15 years. While corporate and larger family-owned piggeries have relied extensively on skilled migrant workers for some time, primarily through the PILA, smaller producers are increasingly utilising the skilled migration pathway.

Consultation conducted to support the development of the APL Workforce Strategy resulted in 60% of respondents indicated that they had staff that were on some form of visa. To date there are 22 producers registered as PILA holders. This represents approximately 50% of Australia’s national herd.

c.) The CSIRO's Data61 (2019)¹ report, and several Government studies of farm labour, outlined that the vast majority of occupations in the pork industry were identified as either 'Livestock Farmer' (skill level 1) (usually the farm owner) or 'Livestock Farm Worker' (skill level 5) with almost no representation of occupations with skills levels in between. Currently, those employed in the Skilled Piggery Stockperson role, would be classified under one of these occupations. Even though these occupations do not accurately describe the skill level or tasks a Skilled Piggery Stockperson possesses.

d.) Under the current ANZSCO there is no occupation that correctly describes the tasks or skill level required of a Skilled Piggery Stockperson. For this reason, the addition of Skilled Piggery Stockperson to an existing ANZSCO occupation, as a specialisation would not meet the needs of the pork industry. However, if a general occupation of Senior Stockperson were included to the ANZSCO to account for other industries who require this occupation, APL would support the inclusion of a speciality under this general occupation provided the tasks and skill level aligned.

e.) Workers in the pork industry often enter the industry without recognised qualifications and develop a range of skills 'on-the-job', which are not recognised through the ANZSCO system. So, they fall into lower skill levels under the ANZSCO system (mostly skill level 5). This is not only irreflexive of the actual skills people in the industry have but is also damaging to the accurate capture of data used to influence government policy and budget decisions. This has a flow on effect as it leads to poor government policies and regulations, due to a lack of understanding of the pork industry and furthers adds to the chronic labour skills shortages felt by the industry.

4) Are there occupations that are emerging, or you anticipate will emerge, in the next 5 to 10 years in your industry, sector or business? For each emerging occupation:

a) Describe the occupation, including tasks involved, relationship to other occupations, any registration or licensing requirements and education and experience requirements and skill level (1 to 5).

b) Indicate the number of people you expect will undertake the occupation in your industry, sector or business in the next 5 to 10 years.

c) Explain what is driving the emergence of the occupation.

d) Describe how you would classify the occupation using the existing categories in ANZSCO.

Compared to the volume of production from nations such as Denmark, Germany, the United States, and China, the Australian pork industry is relatively small. However, it is leading in science, sustainability, and social responsibility. Advancements in innovation and technology on Australian farms have played a major role in maintaining Australia's competitiveness in global markets and continue to shape the agriculture industry domestically. Particularly, technology has had a profound impact on the depth of skills and abilities that are required of the agricultural workforce. Changes in the type of workforce required because of these advancements have become particularly evident in the Australian pork industry.

Over the next 5 to 10 years, we do not anticipate the emergence of any new occupations, however we do anticipate a greater need for skilled labour to maintain this highly technical, specialised, and dynamic modern Australian pork industry. Australian pig production will require a workforce of suitably skilled people responsible for technical animal husbandry procedures including artificial insemination, management of herd health and biosecurity, nutrition, and growth and productivity. However, increased innovation in automation and robotics, sustainable energy and feed waste utilisation on pig farms will call for a workforce with skills in, for example, engineering and energy science.

¹ <https://data61.csiro.au/en/Our-Research/Our-Work/Future-Cities/Planning-sustainable-infrastructure/Future-of-Australias-agricultural-workforce>

While installation of technology like automated feeders, will likely be contracted out, maintenance of these technologies will be handled in-house and require the current workforce to up-skill and adapt to these new duties.

5) Are there occupations that are declining, or you anticipate will decline in the next 5 to 10 years in your industry, sector or business? For each declining occupation, please explain what is driving the decline of the occupation.

Within the Australian pork industry, it is anticipated we would see a shift in the type of skills needed within the workforce over the next 5 to 10 years, however we do not anticipate a decline in the occupations within the industry.

Although the pork industry is investing in research and innovation in automation and robotics, these technologies will always require a human auditing function. This will be driven in part by an increase of regulations, and social licensing requirements, such as animal welfare and sustainability. It will also be driven by the need to maintain technologies and analyse data and information to ensure the continuation of productivity within the production system.

6) Are there further issues in relation to ANZSCO that you would like to provide feedback on?

The Australian pork industry faces significant difficulties attracting and retaining labour. Labour supply deficits have primarily been caused by poor social perceptions of the industry, dominated by ill-conceived notions that a career in the industry is unrewarding, non-technical, and one with limited pathways for career development. However, given the increasingly technical and integrated nature of the pork supply chain, this view simply does not reflect the reality of the modern Australian pork industry.

The pork industry requires an ANZSCO that is current and fit for purpose and accurately reflects the pork industry and the businesses within, this will assist us in easing these misconceptions and attracting people back to pork production.

APL recognises this can only be achieved through a collaborative relationship between government and industry. However, without accurate data and systems it will be difficult. This review of the ANZSCO and consultation with the agricultural industry goes a long way in achieving this collaborative relationship.

1.2 Additional Questions

1) What occupations or emerging occupations in your industry, sector or business are amenable to an apprenticeship model? For each occupation, please outline the current skilling process and why an apprenticeship model is more appropriate.

2) What occupations or emerging occupations in your industry, sector or business are amenable to a traineeship model? For each occupation, please outline the current skilling process and why a traineeship model is appropriate.

Currently, all stockpersons working with pigs must, at the very least, have appropriate training to ensure compliance with state animal welfare legislation. A stockperson is considered suitably qualified if they are a veterinarian, hold a Certificate III in Pork Production or equivalent, or have completed assessment by a Registered Training Organisation in:

- the movement and handling of pigs;
- care for the health and welfare of pigs;
- compliance with industry animal welfare requirements;
- administration of medication to livestock

However, there are issues in accessing this training, which creates barriers to staff gaining the necessary skills. These include:

- Availability - local TAFEs or private Registered Training Organisations (RTO) may not offer the training as there is not enough demand in specific locations.
- Location - staff may have to travel to larger regional towns, a city or interstate to access the training.
- Timing - low frequency of training courses being run means there are delays in staff being trained after commencing employment.
- Cost - travel, time, absence from work, and course fees all contribute to the overall cost of training staff.
- Biosecurity – staff attending formal training visit other piggeries and therefore must abide by exclusion periods before attending work again, potentially creating staffing issues.

Some of the larger corporate piggeries are able to overcome the difficulties of accessing formal training courses by developing and providing their own in-house training to staff. Medium and smaller size commercial piggeries use a mix of on-the-job training, specific training provided by vets or online industry run courses to overcome the limited access to formal training.

Due to the issues detailed above, frequently, workers in the pork industry will enter the industry without recognised qualifications and develop a range of skills ‘on-the-job’ and will undertake the Certificate III in Pork Production to upskill. This lends itself to an informal apprenticeship/traineeship model, where skills are obtained within the workplace but are supported by a formal qualification. However, there is currently no government supported apprenticeship/traineeship program designed for the pork industry.

The corporatisation of farming businesses in the modern agricultural industry has introduced places of employment that need people with official qualifications. Official qualifications provide the employer with more certainty that a person has a skillset that is of use to their business. Larger businesses can not only support people with nationally recognised qualifications but need them. The development of an agricultural ‘trade-equivalent’ qualification would equip the worker with skillsets that could be carried across industries.

It is important that Australia’s workforce understand that highly skilled occupations are not only available in the agricultural industry but are in high demand. In promoting this, we must add value to experience in agriculture by developing a nationally consistent ‘trade-equivalent’ job brand for skilled farm workers. This is crucial in attracting school leavers, as currently working on a farm does not provide the worker with a qualification over a period of time. This is the opposite for apprenticeships in trades, who can obtain nationally recognised qualifications despite needing similar technical ability. The ability to become recognisably qualified in trades makes those careers much more attractive compared to agriculture.

3) What occupations or emerging occupations in your industry, sector or business are amenable to a higher apprenticeship model (NCVER, 2019), including those currently at diploma level and above? For each occupation, please describe the current or future skilling process and why a higher apprenticeship model is more appropriate.

During consultation on the *APL Workforce Strategy*, some of the large to medium size commercial piggeries acknowledged a skill gap that exists in middle management and stated they expect it will become more significant in the future. This leads many producers to seek management expertise from outside the industry or from overseas, noting migrant staff were willing to be supervisors but were reluctant to take on management roles.

Typically, those in middle management would have a Certificate III in pork production with many years of experience within the piggery or will have obtained a Diploma of Pork Production. The Diploma provides an occupational outcome for personnel working on piggeries who manage enterprise production units. The pork industry expects that graduates from this qualification will be able to perform a range of tasks associated with the role of a piggery manager, including analysis and synthesis of information, design, communication and solution of complex problems and the management of self and others.

The higher apprenticeship model would allow people to gain experience on the job and support them to move from the role of supervisor to middle management. This would fill the skill gap, provide career progression and satisfaction, and draw people to a career in pork. Additionally, the higher apprenticeship model could be used as a pathway to a bachelor degree, allowing further career progression to farm manager.

4) What occupations in your industry, sector or business are most likely needed to be filled through migration? For each occupation:

a) Explain the barriers to filling the occupation from the domestic workforce.

b) Detail the advantages and disadvantages to filling the occupation through migration.

a.) The Australian pork industry is diverse in terms of location, scale, ownership, and method of production. Combined with gradual consolidation of the industry over the past two decades, many piggeries now demand specialist skills within their workforce. Unfortunately, appropriately skilled workers who are available for employment in the Australian pig industry are difficult or impossible to source locally. The pork industry has suffered ongoing difficulties in sourcing skilled piggery workers.

Consultation to support the development of the *APL Workforce Strategy* resulted in 74% of respondents indicating that labour and skill gaps were their main workforce issues. Engagement also highlighted that despite significant efforts, they struggle to find enough local people to employ, particularly with the appropriate interest, attitude and skills. Having the right attitude and interest was considered of great importance, and most producers would readily employ local people and support them with training, if these criteria were met.

There have also been consistently more jobs available in agriculture than there have been suitable candidates for the past fifteen years. Research has shown that farms across the agriculture industry experience difficulties recruiting skilled (non-labourer) positions due to applicants lacking the required capabilities and experience.² This is of particular relevance to the pork industry which requires a skilled workforce to undertake much of the day-to-day running of a piggery.

As of November 2018, 82% of agricultural employees lived in regional Australia.³ The agriculture sector not only provides an important source of economic and employment opportunity for regional Australia but enables a strong social fabric within these communities. However, a career in agriculture, and specifically the pork industry, often requires employees and their families to relocate and live remotely away from services that are often taken for granted in urban settings. Access to schooling facilities for children, centres of employment for partners, health facilities, and shopping centres can become difficult. While the remuneration rates in the pork industry are competitive and often subject to considerable increases over short periods of time, the current workforce demands more than just competitive pay to live and work remotely.

b.) Skilled overseas workers have played a significant role in addressing the workforce shortages experienced by industry. While corporate and larger family-owned piggeries have relied extensively

² Dufty, N, Martin, P and Zhao, S (2019) Demand for Farm Workers: ABARES farm survey results 2018, Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences, Canberra

³ <https://australianjobs.employment.gov.au/jobs-industry/agriculture-forestry-and-fishing>

on skilled migrant workers for some time, primarily through the Pork Industry Labour Agreement (PILA), smaller producers are increasingly utilising the skilled migration pathway.

Notably, the majority of skilled migrants employed in the industry have come from the Philippines. Overwhelmingly, producers acknowledge the importance of their Filipino employees to their operations because of their relevant skills, with most having tertiary agricultural science or veterinary qualifications and piggery experience from their own country. Other positive attributes that producers highlight of the Filipino staff include their strong work ethic, interest in the industry and commitment to community.

Given this ability to recruit skilled migrants via the PILA, or other visa programs, many pig producers state they now have little issues attracting and retaining staff. Importantly, they also report a significant decrease in turnover of their Australian-born staff since the arrival of the skilled migrants. Improved staff retention is caused by lower turnover rates in the workforce as a whole, with more people with the right skills and aptitude for the job. Overall, this creates a far more stable and fulfilling workplace.

Through the PILA, the temporary skilled migration program also provides a pathway for skilled migrants working in pig production to gain permanent residency in Australia. The existence of this pathway is a critical aspect of the program as it provides a long-term solution to ongoing skills shortages faced by the industry. These skilled migrants tend to stay in the pig industry once they have achieved permanent residency and settle in regional towns. Population growth in regional Australia is paramount to sustaining country towns. For many of these regional towns in Australia, the overseas-born migrants are the only source of population growth and thus, it is hard to overestimate the long-term benefit of skilled migrants arriving in regional Australia⁴.

During consultation on the *APL Workforce Strategy*, producers identified a range of issues with obtaining and relying on migrant workers. One issue is the lengthy timeframe from application through to the arrival of skilled migrants, which usually takes a year. Other concerns identified during consultation included that the process can be costly, the applications are increasingly complex, and some noted they struggled to understand the immigration system.

Unfortunately, there are currently a number of employers in the pork industry reporting severe difficulties getting their PILA applications, PILA ceiling change requests and PILA renewal applications responded to by delegates within the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). With the long standing, chronic workforce shortages that industry experiences, compounded by further skill and labour shortages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this lack of response from the DHA poses a major threat to the continuity of these businesses and to the welfare of the animals on piggeries.

Beyond the issues identified with the immigration process, cultural adjustment and lack of cultural support can also be a downside to skilled migration. This was more of an issue 10 years ago, when producers were beginning to use skilled migrants. However, it can still be a concern for those producers just beginning the process, where a skilled migrant employee may be the only person of that cultural background in the piggery and the local community, and hence can feel particularly isolated. Consideration as to how new migrant employees are supported in their cultural adjustment to both the workplace and lifestyle is essential. Loss of a recently arrived sponsored skilled overseas worker, or delays in their ability to positively contribute to the workforce due to a lack of cultural support, is a significant risk to the investment made in the sponsorship process.

Without access to the temporary skilled migration program, the supply of highly skilled, reliable and committed workers from overseas would be removed from the Australian labour market. This

⁴ <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/migrants-stopping-regional-areas-shrinking/>

would result in a very restricted skilled labour market for pig producers, compounding with the existing struggles of acquiring suitably qualified labour locally.

5) What occupations in your industry, sector or business are in demand and/or hard to fill? Please address the following:

- a) Explain whether these occupations are an ongoing issue in your industry, sector or business.
- b) Detail how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected demand or ability to fill these occupations.
- c) Describe the impact this demand has on your industry, sector or business.
- d) Outline how this issue could best be resolved.

a.) The agriculture industries, and particularly the pork industry, have endured longstanding difficulties attracting and retaining a stable skilled and unskilled workforce due to poor social perceptions. Pig farming is not regarded amongst Australians as a prestigious career choice. The poor social perceptions of the industry are arguably the biggest threat to the current and future agricultural workforce. In a labour-related industry survey carried out by APL in 2017, 94% of respondents said the perceived unattractiveness of the pig industry was the main impediment to recruiting Australian workers.

As outlined in publications by the Regional Australia Institute, a widely held dogma within the Australian workforce is that an agricultural career is unrewarding, requires only a low level of skill and has very little, if any, opportunity for career development.⁵ This drives people like university graduates with desirable skillsets, away from the industry. However, given the size and technical nature of the pork industry, this is not true.

Concerningly, this lack of awareness and understanding is particularly prevalent within primary, secondary, and tertiary students who will underpin the future pork industry workforce. Australian piggeries are also hampered by a skills shortage, a side effect of the market failure within the vocational education and training (VET) sector which has resulted in a reduction of fit-for-purpose training courses that drive the upskilling of piggery employees.

b.) The existing hardships faced by the Australian pork industry in attracting and retaining a suitable workforce has been exacerbated by COVID-19, limiting the accessibility and movement of skilled migrant workers to Australia to take up work on Australian piggeries. Despite the increases in domestic unemployment rates as brought on by COVID-19, the skill shortage faced by the Australian pork industry has not been met by the Australian workforce.

This is reflected through the underwhelming application rates to the Federal Government's relocation assistance scheme offering up to \$6,000 of assistance to those willing to take up a job in agriculture.

The application rates to this scheme are exemplary of the attitudes primary producers are faced with when seeking employees from the Australian workforce. As of the most recent figures, there were only 355 applications made by Australians to the relocation assistance scheme nationwide. This sheds light on the disinterest many Australian workers have towards work in agriculture despite financial support.

Some producers also employ people on Working Holiday Maker visas (i.e. backpackers) to help address labour gaps in their piggeries. Backpackers provide a "stop gap" measure when waiting for a skilled overseas migrant on a TSS visa to arrive and can assist with relieving permanent staff from weekend or holiday shifts. However, border closures caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic have had an immediate impact by reducing the number of backpackers currently available in Australia,

⁵ <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/RAI-Regional-Jobs-for-the-Future-Submission.pdf>

and by creating extensive delays in temporary skilled visa holder migration. The pandemic's impact on Australia's economic climate, including the unemployment rate, is causing concern for producers regarding possible changes to immigration policies the Federal government may implement in response to the crisis. Producers are worried about this uncertainty and their ability to access skilled overseas workers through the PILA or other visa programs, both now and in the future.

c.) Unfortunately, there are currently several employers in the pork industry reporting severe difficulties having their PILAs processed by the DHA. With the chronic workforce shortages that industry experiences, further compounded by COVID-19, the lack of response from the DHA poses a major threat to animal welfare and business continuity.

It is important that the regulatory and policy environment surrounding Australia's migration programs aim to enable rather than inhibit access to skilled migrants for Australian agricultural businesses. There is a significant cost associated with applying for skilled visas which becomes an impediment to piggeries when there is no guarantee of positive outcomes. Recent reports by producers have also highlighted the bureaucratic and inflexible decision-making process on PILA applications by delegates within the DHA. The process by which PILAs are assessed has become dominated by unaccountability and a lack of transparency. This, when combined with existing workforce struggles emphasised by COVID-19, is causing impediments to the continuity of these businesses and presents risks to animal welfare outcomes on piggeries.

d.) The Australian pork industry continues to face significant difficulties attracting and retaining labour due to a raft of impediments, including poor social perception and a lack of awareness and understanding of the industry by future workforce participants. Compounding these supply constraints are the increasing shortages in skilled workers available to piggeries which has been caused, in part, by market failure within the vocational and education training (VET) sector. Whilst the Australian pork industry continues to implement initiatives aimed at increasing the Australian workforce pool, it also relies on skilled migration to meet current shortfalls.

The NFF, and its members including APL, believe that Australian agriculture can exceed \$100 billion in farmgate output value by 2030, a vision endorsed by the Australian Government⁶. However, despite this optimistic outlook, should the agricultural workforce continue to experience chronic skills and labour shortages this ambitious target will be placed at significant risk. For Australian agribusiness to realise its full growth potential it must be supported by an adequately trained and well supported workforce. Overcoming current constraints requires ongoing partnership between government and industry to deliver an ANZSCO that is reflective of industry, supported by an annual national labour and skills survey that supports ongoing policy and an investment in the resourcing of decision-making agencies like the DHA to facilitate migrant workforce.

Conclusion

The Australian pork industry faces significant difficulties attracting and retaining labour. Labour supply deficits have primarily been caused by poor social perceptions of the industry, dominated by ill-conceived notions that a career in the industry is unrewarding, non-technical, and one with limited pathways for career development. However, given the increasingly technical and integrated nature of the pork supply chain, this view simply does not reflect the reality of the modern Australian pork industry.

⁶ <https://www.awe.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/dawe-purpose-objective-priorities-statement.pdf>

The pork industry requires an ANZSCO that is current and fit for purpose and accurately reflects the pork industry and the businesses within, this will assist us in easing these misconceptions and attracting people back to pork production.

APL recognises this can only be achieved through a collaborative relationship between government and industry. However, without accurate data and systems it will be difficult. This review of the ANZSCO and consultation with the agricultural industry goes a long way in achieving this collaborative relationship.

Appendix A – Mapping of ANZSCO framework

Piggery Worker

I.3 SUB-MAJOR GROUP 84 FARM, FORESTRY AND GARDEN WORKERS

FARM, FORESTRY AND GARDEN WORKERS perform a variety of routine tasks in cultivating and harvesting crops, plants and forests, breeding, **feeding** and raising **and milking** of livestock and aquatic stock, and the management of pests and weeds.

Indicative Skill Level:

Most occupations in this sub-major group have a level of skill commensurate with the qualifications and experience outlined below.

In Australia:

AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education (ANZSCO Skill Level 5)

In some instances relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification. In the case of some Skill Level 5 occupations, a short period of on-the-job training may be required in addition to or instead of the formal qualification, or no formal qualification or on-the-job training may be required.

Tasks Include:

- planting and propagating trees, seeds, seedlings, bulbs and vines
- pruning and thinning crops, vines and trees
- monitoring the condition of crops and livestock and ensuring that they have adequate water and feed
- harvesting, sorting and packing produce into containers
- mustering and droving livestock
- **breeding, feeding, raising and milking livestock**
- cultivating and maintaining natural and plantation forests and felling trees
- managing and controlling pests and weeds species by applying chemicals and trapping and shooting animals

This section contains the following subsection:

[MINOR GROUP 841 Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers](#)

UNIT GROUP 8415 LIVESTOCK FARM WORKERS

LIVESTOCK FARM WORKERS perform routine tasks in livestock, **milk, pork**, egg and wool production.

Indicative Skill Level:

Most occupations in this unit group have a level of skill commensurate with the qualifications outlined below.

In Australia:

AQF Certificate II or III, or at least one year of relevant experience (ANZSCO Skill Level 4); or

AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education (ANZSCO Skill Level 5)

In New Zealand:

NZ Register Level 2 or 3 qualification, or at least one year of relevant experience (ANZSCO Skill Level 4)

NZ Register Level 1 qualification, or compulsory secondary education (ANZSCO Skill Level 5)

For some occupations a short period of on-the-job training may be required in addition to or instead of the formal qualification. In some instances no formal qualification or on-the-job training may be required.

Tasks Include:

- patrolling, inspecting and reporting on the condition of livestock
- providing livestock with feed and water
- **establishing pastures and crops for livestock production**
- **assisting with implementing animal health programs**
- **assisting with carrying out livestock birthing duties**
- **assisting with rearing young livestock**
- **undertaking fencing construction repairs and maintenance**
- **operating and maintaining farm machinery**
- **assisting with operating and maintaining data collection and analysis and farm technology systems**
- **operating irrigation systems**
- assisting with maintaining the health and welfare of livestock
- mustering and droving livestock to milking and shearing sheds and between paddocks to ensure sufficient feed is available
- washing and cleaning udders, and attaching milking machines to udders and milking cows
- collecting eggs and placing in incubators
- herding sheep for shearing and keeping mobs separate during shearing
- spreading fleeces on skirting tables for classing, pressing wool and branding bales
- exercising horses by walking, riding, leading and swimming, and attending to horses at track work, barrier trials and races
- cleaning stables and hatcheries, storing bedding and performing minor repairs on fixtures, buildings and fences
- assembling, preparing and storing horse gear

Occupations:

841511 Beef Cattle Farm Worker
841512 Dairy Cattle Farm Worker
841513 Mixed Livestock Farm Worker
841514 Poultry Farm Worker
841515 Sheep Farm Worker
841516 Stablehand
841517 Wool Handler
841518 Piggery worker (move from 841599)
841599 Livestock Farm Workers nec

841518 PIGGERY WORKER

Assists with routine tasks on a pig farm such as breeding, raising, feeding and assisting with animal husbandry.

Skill Level: 4

Appendix B – Mapping of ANZSCO framework Skilled Piggery Stockperson

1.4 SUB-MAJOR GROUP 36 SKILLED ANIMAL AND HORTICULTURAL WORKERS

SKILLED ANIMAL AND HORTICULTURAL WORKERS care for, groom, train and shear animals, **breed, raise and milk livestock**, assist Veterinarians, establish and maintain gardens, parks and surfaces used for sport, and prepare and sell floral arrangements and flowers.

Indicative Skill Level:

Most occupations in this sub-major group have a level of skill commensurate with the qualifications and experience outlined below.

In Australia:

AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, or AQF Certificate IV (ANZSCO Skill Level 3).

In New Zealand:

NZ Register Level 4 qualification (ANZSCO Skill Level 3)

At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualifications listed above. In some instances relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Tasks Include:

- caring for and grooming animals
- **breeding and raising livestock for milk, egg, meat and wool production**
- training animals to obey commands and perform in competitions
- shearing wool and hair from animals
- assisting Veterinarians to perform procedures and operations
- arranging supply and storage of flowers and selecting, trimming and arranging flowers and decorations
- planning, constructing and maintaining gardens, parks and surfaces used for sports
- selecting seeds, bulbs and cuttings, and planting them in beds, lawn areas and tubs

This section contains the following subsection:

[MINOR GROUP 361 Animal Attendants and Trainers, and Shearers](#)

[MINOR GROUP 362 Horticultural Trades Workers](#)

MINOR GROUP 363 Livestock Workers

MINOR GROUP 363 LIVESTOCK WORKERS

LIVESTOCK WORKERS perform a variety of tasks in breeding, feeding and raising livestock.

Indicative Skill Level:

Most occupations in this minor group have a level of skill commensurate with the qualifications and experience outlined below.

In Australia:

AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, or AQF Certificate IV (ANZSCO Skill Level 3)

At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualifications listed above.

In New Zealand:

NZQF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience (ANZSCO Skill Level 3)

In some instances, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Tasks Include:

- Managing breeding, rearing, feeding and milking livestock
- Managing crops and pastures for livestock production
- Managing animal health programs
- Supervise work routines and work performance

This section contains the following subsections:

UNIT GROUP 3631 Skilled Livestock Worker

UNIT GROUP 3631 SKILLED LIVESTOCK WORKER

Skilled livestock workers perform a variety of tasks in breeding, raising and milking livestock.

In Australia:

AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, or AQF Certificate IV (ANZSCO Skill Level 3)

At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualifications listed above.

In New Zealand:

NZQF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience (ANZSCO Skill Level 3)

In some instances relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Tasks Include:

- manage pastures for livestock production
- develop livestock feeding plans
- identify animal health problems
- implement and supervise animal health and nutrition program
- manage animal breeding programs
- maintain work health and safety processes
- implement and monitor Quality Assurance Procedures
- operating and maintaining data collection and analysis and farm technology
- manage irrigation systems
- supervise work routines and work performance

Occupations

363111 Skilled Piggery Stockperson

Perform skilled tasks on a piggery in the breeding, farrowing, raising, feeding, treatment and welfare of pigs.

Skill Level: 3

Specialisation:

Senior Stockperson (Piggery)



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