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Certificate III in Agriculture

The agricultural industry has diverse pathways and relevant practical units / tickets / skill sets that are particular to regions and industries. These are highly desired in future employees and any skill development must utilise the latest technology. Access to quality and relevant work placements is strongly recommended to assist with development of employability skills. Students should undertake sufficient practical experience on a range of different tasks and be able to work with limited direction.

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries is the 10th highest employing industry in Tasmania with nearly 11,000 employees as of May 2021. However, this sector has seen a decrease in employment of nearly 14% over the past 5 years¹. The sector is largely made up of workers employed in agribusiness and there is a high level of self-employment (around 50%). The need for formal qualifications is less common with about half of the workforce having no post school qualifications. The increase in technology use in the sector will see an increased need for highly skilled workers. Seasonal work, such as fruit picking, may present short-term opportunities².

RESPONSE FROM AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY FOCUS GROUP

Tasmania has a diverse agricultural sector and there is some disconnect between training and working in the industry. Each region has specific needs, for example, some regions an abundance of fruit production opportunities and others are focused on dairy production. Therefore, there is not one size fits all training solution. Training may not have a place in all business, particularly in small businesses. There is a workforce shortage of technical workers, even though training is available.

Perception of the industry is problematic, and this includes parents of school aged learners. Work is currently underway to improve the image of the agricultural industry including at the University of Tasmania, but VET needs to be promoted as an equally important pathway. There is evidence that some students (ie. academic, females) are strongly discouraged from pursuing careers in the sector. The promotion of the agricultural industry needs work, even though the post school options have strong employment outcomes. Industry is trying to engage with schools directly and is getting mixed responses and reporting a poor uptake.

¹ [Tasmania | National Skills Commission](#)

² [Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | National Skills Commission](#)

The disconnect between the sector and training also provides challenges in encouraging employers to work with young people. Whilst there are many young people interested in careers in the sector there appears to be difficulty in accessing employers to either provide work experience, undertake school-based apprenticeships / traineeships, or employ post-school. Employers often prefer more mature workers with drivers' licences.

Preferred skills for school leavers entering the sector:

- The school's role should be to foster employability skills and best practice is seen as contextualising industry information in other learning areas such as in the Packages of Learning approach.
- Students are encouraged to have a basic understanding of WHS before work placement as to not limit activities they can undertake. The free platform AgCard³ should be used with students prior to work experiences. VegPRO⁴ is another program specific to induction in the vegetable industry.
- A driver's licence, maturity, and an ability to work independently and follow instructions are highly valued attributes. There is not generally a culture of training in the sector so many workers may be unsupported in the workplace.

Preferred pathways for school leavers entering the sector:

- The sector did not articulate a preferred pathway but given a qualification is not mandatory in most of the roles, there are many opportunities for ongoing training and development post-school.
- Due to the practical nature of many of the jobs; work and life experience are preferred, such as apprenticeship over institutional delivery.
- Industry is supportive of schools reaching out for support to deliver content and ensure that it is relevant and current, particularly in the delivery of VET qualifications.
- There is support for agricultural studies to happen with school farms through the Primary Schools to Primary Industries initiative.

The sector has concerns for the completion of Certificate III Agriculture in school/college for the following reasons:

- Employers in the North / North West are engaging school aged learners in full-time and school-based apprenticeships in Certificate III Agriculture. If this qualification is completed at school, this option is no longer available for the student.
- Qualifications aren't valued as much as work experience in the industry. The exception are a few examples of specific tickets that are required such as wool classing, safe chemical handling, chainsaws.
- Delivery of programs to school students should include the relevant skill sets in the region.
- There is a strong preference in Years 11 / 12 for VET to be offered alongside complementary TASC programs to provide a balance of practical skill development and academic rigour.

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³ www.primaryemployers.com.au/agcard

⁴ www.vegpro.com.au