

Submitter information

Please provide your name and phone number, and preferred email address for contact if it is different from the one used to send this form:

s 9(2)(g)(i), s 9(2)(a)

In what capacity are you providing feedback?
e.g. on behalf of: your company, the company you work for, an industry organisation, a union, a licensed immigration adviser etc.

I am the HR Manager for FarmRight Ltd and represent the 58 dairy farms that are managed by FarmRight Ltd. We have approximately 300 staff working on these farms and approximately 40% of those staff are on either Work Visas or Residence Visas.

If you are representing a company or group, what is the name of that group?

FarmRight Ltd

What industry or industries does that group work in?

Agriculture Industry. Dairy Sector

In your company or industry, what are the most common occupations for migrant workers?

Dairy Farm Assistant, Herd Manager, 2IC, Unit Manager, Assistant Manager, Manager

What visa categories are commonly used by those workers?

I.e. resident visa, Essential Skills work visa, Work-to-Residence work visa (under the Talent or Long Term Skill Shortage List categories), Post-Study work visa (open or employer assisted), open work visa.

Essential Skills work visa, resident visa, Skill Shortage Visa.

Only answer the following questions if you directly employ migrant workers:

How many migrant workers do you currently employ? (Refer to the visa categories in the question above)

There are approximately 120 visa holders on FarmRight farms.

Have you supported an Essential Skills visa application for any of these workers?

Using wage or salary information to help determine skill level and access to Essential Skills migrants

Proposal 1: Introduction of remuneration thresholds to determine skill levels and associated visa conditions for Essential Skills visas

Consider the proposal of aligning the remuneration thresholds for the Essential Skills visa with the remuneration thresholds for the Skilled Migrant Category.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from defining lower-, mid- and higher-skilled Essential Skills migrants in this way?

Give details of the occupations or sectors and wage or salary levels you are thinking of.

FarmRight support the idea that skill level be determined by the wage level. We believe this is the most effective and accurate way to determine someone's skill level and thus determine their requirement on farm.

We strongly oppose the wage levels that are proposed.

Farm Assistants on FarmRight farms earn an average of approximately \$19 per hour and our Herd Managers earn an average of approximately \$22 per hour.

Approximately 30% of our staff are Farm Assistants and Herd Managers on Work Visas.

This means that most of our farms will be impacted by the wage levels proposed in that they will be subject to repeated annual re-applications for work visas, they will lose the staff member after 3 years, which discourages training, development and investment, and that they may be impacted by the staff member's inability to have their family near them.

Noting that an average team of 5 would include a Farm Manager, a 2IC, a Herd Manager, and 2 Farm Assistants. Meaning at least 1 staff member on every farm will be subject to the disruptive conditions proposed and then lose them after 3 years. That's 20% of each business being subject to a heightened level of staff turnover driven by what what we see as ineffective conditions on lower-level work visas.

We believe a healthy alternative would be to either lower the Mid-Level cut-off to \$19 or to split the low-level into two and give slightly longer visa terms (2 years) to those above \$19. We believe this would drive development for lower level staff in order for them to achieve the \$19 cut-off sooner so as to achieve the longer term. We believe this would also encourage the employment and development of New Zealanders without stripping the farm of skill required to keep the business afloat.

We also believe in ensuring that New Zealanders have every chance of securing the positions prior to a work visa being approved for a foreigner. To encourage this we believe that proof of recruitment and development of New Zealand workers should be at a high level.

Reinforcing the temporary nature of the Essential Skills visa and managing the settlement expectations of temporary migrants

Proposal 2a: Introduction of a maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills migrants

Consider the option of a three years for a maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visas.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from the proposed maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

The proposal implies that a Farm Assistant or Herd Manager in the Dairy sector has three years to develop into an Assistant Manager or Farm Manager before being eligible for longer terms, family presence, and to dodge the crucial 3 year cut off where they would be stood down.

We believe in most cases three years is not enough time to develop an entry level staff member into an assistant manager or manager.

In many cases staff do not wish to pursue management level roles, while at the same time Lower and Mid-Level roles are the most difficult to fill with New Zealanders.

We believe the three year maximum before stand-down will significantly disrupt the dairy sector. Reapplying for a visa every year will disrupt and waste resources for both the employer and employee. The uncertainty linked with the three year stand down will discourage investment in those staff. The departure of skill from the farm every three years will put added reliance on managers to step in to cover operational aspects and further limit their time available to develop New Zealand staff.

Proposal 2b: Introduction of stand down period for lower-skilled Essential Skills migrants

Consider the option for a year-long stand down period following the maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visas.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

Every June the dairy sector sees an influx of new staff. New staff are sought to cover the year, with particular emphasis on starting them before the busy calving season and keeping them on throughout the year.

A stand down of a year, and the departure of skill and experience from the farm driving the manager to spend more time in operations and less time developing NZ staff will likely mean that the employee departing will be replaced by a new employee on a work visa.

A stand down of a year will mean the investment into that person for the past year will depart offshore with the person. Discouraging investment in staff of any sort.

The departure of skill from the farm every three years will put added reliance on managers to step in to cover operational aspects and further limit their time available to develop New

Zealand staff.

We strongly discourage any stand down period.

We propose that more emphasis should be put on employer proving that they have made a concerted effort to both recruit for and develop local New Zealanders.

Proposal 3: Require the partners of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right

Consider the proposal to require the partners of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

We believe that if an employee on a Work Visa has earned the right to be in NZ as a result of a lack of skill in NZ then they are better people and employees if they can bring their partners and children with them.

Proposal 4: Require the children of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right

Consider the proposal to require the children of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

We believe that if an employee on a Work Visa has earned the right to be in NZ as a result of a lack of skill in NZ then they are better people and employees if they can bring their partners and children with them.

Reinforce that Essential Skills visas should only be granted for the period for which the employment is offered

Proposal 5: Make it explicit how the 'period of employment' condition applies to seasonal work

Consider the option to reinforce that Essential Skills visas for seasonal work are only for the length of the season and that the offer of employment must match the length of the season.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these options?

Give details of the occupations or sectors you think are likely to be affected.

Support.

Consider the list of seasonal occupations being considered.

Are there any seasonal occupations that should be added or removed from this list? Why?

Dairy staff are required for a full year. While there are seasons to the year, in most cases the lack of skill relates to roles that are required to be in place all year round.

Consider the list of seasonal occupations being considered.

If you employ seasonal staff, or represent a sector with seasonal staff:

- What are the occupations of the seasonal staff within the sector that you are commenting on?
- For each of the occupations that you have identified, what is the typical period that you require seasonal staff to cover (e.g the peak of the season)?

Dairy staff are required for a full year. While there are seasons to the year, in most cases the lack of skill relates to roles that are required to be in place all year round. Meaning any staff relying on a work visa would usually not be there/needed for a set period.

Signed by 9(2)(a) HR Manager, FarmRight Ltd

9(2)(a)