

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Year 0–10 draft curriculum content. This submission is primarily focused on the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) – Science, while also recognising the strong connections between science and other learning areas.

About Beef + Lamb New Zealand

Beef + Lamb New Zealand Ltd (B+LNZ) is an industry-good organisation funded under the Commodity Levies Act. Funding is generated through a levy paid by producers on all cattle (excluding bobby calves) and sheep slaughtered in New Zealand. A core purpose of levy investment is research and development that meets the needs of farmers and supports the long-term success of the sector.

B+LNZ represents approximately 9,000 farming businesses and supports around 92,000 jobs across the red meat sector, including more than 36,000 direct on-farm roles. Employment is concentrated largely in regional New Zealand, making the sector a cornerstone of rural economies.

Māori Participation and Leadership

Māori play a significant role across the sheep and beef value chain. Around 15 percent of sheep and beef export revenue comes from Māori farming interests. Māori also make up approximately 36 percent of the on-farm sheep and beef workforce, with a similar proportion working in the red meat processing sector. Māori participation is therefore integral to the sector's productivity, cultural strength, and future leadership.

Economic Contribution of the Red Meat Sector

The red meat sector is a major contributor to New Zealand's economy. Export revenue is forecast to reach \$13.2 billion in the year to 30 June 2026. New Zealand exports more than 95 percent of its sheepmeat production and over 90 percent of beef production, supplying nearly 110 markets worldwide. The sector's performance is critical to national prosperity and export resilience.

B+LNZ Vision for the Sector

B+LNZ's vision for New Zealand's sheep and beef producers is:

“Sustainable and profitable farmers. Thriving rural communities. Valued by New Zealanders.”

This vision reflects a long-term commitment to environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social licence, and aligns closely with broader education and workforce development goals.

Connecting the Vision to the Curriculum

While this submission focuses on the science curriculum, B+LNZ's vision demonstrates how easily primary industries connect across multiple learning areas when curriculum links are made explicit.

Curriculum connections include:

- **Sustainable**
Science, Social Studies, Mathematics & Statistics, Financial Literacy, Economics, Accounting
- **Profitable**
Mathematics & Statistics, Financial Literacy, Economics, Accounting
- **Rural Communities**
Social Studies, Aotearoa New Zealand Histories
- **Valued**
Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, Matariki

Agriculture offers rich, authentic contexts for learning across subjects and year levels when teachers are supported to understand and use these connections.

Agriculture as a National Priority for Education

Agriculture is formally recognised by government as an area of national significance and remains the largest contributor to New Zealand's tradeable economy. Despite this, agriculture is currently underrepresented in the curriculum at primary, intermediate, and junior secondary levels. Many teachers are not fully aware of the sector's importance, resulting in missed opportunities for knowledge-rich, relevant learning.

As a consequence, students often progress through schooling with little understanding of how food is produced, how land and animals are managed, or how science and technology underpin primary sector success.

Food Security, Capability, and Resilience

Food security depends not only on trade and supply chains, but on practical, place-based knowledge. Skills such as soil and water stewardship, climate adaptation, animal and plant health management, and system-level thinking are cumulative and take generations to build.

When a nation loses this capability, it becomes increasingly vulnerable to global shocks, biosecurity risks, climate extremes, and market disruption. A workforce grounded in agricultural and food system

science provides resilience and ensures food can continue to be produced safely, efficiently, and sustainably as conditions change.

Food Integrity and Public Trust

Food integrity is inseparable from production capability. People who understand how food is produced are better equipped to uphold standards for animal welfare, environmental care, food safety, and nutritional quality. Informed decision-making across the entire production chain protects public trust in food systems.

In a world facing rising food demand, land pressure, and climate uncertainty, maintaining a strong base of skilled food producers is not optional. It is strategic national infrastructure. Early investment in food production knowledge supports national sovereignty, public health, and long-term prosperity.

The Knowledge Gap and Its Implications

A 2016 Rabobank survey found that 81 percent of surveyed urban New Zealand teenagers knew “only a little” or “nothing at all” about farming and food production, while just 2 percent felt they knew a great deal. This lack of understanding highlights the urgency for curriculum change.

From a population of approximately 5.34 million, New Zealand’s primary industries produce food for an estimated 40 million people globally and export to over 200 markets. The sector generates more than 78 percent of the country’s export revenue. To remain economically prosperous, environmentally sustainable, and globally competitive, New Zealand needs an education system that actively supports and inspires participation in the primary industries.

Workforce Pressures and Future Skills

As New Zealand’s population ages, urbanisation increases, and birth rates decline, workforce pressures will intensify. Around half of the primary industry workforce is now employed beyond the farm gate, in areas such as agritech, data science, environmental management, and advanced processing—highly skilled and rapidly growing fields.

Like other developed countries, New Zealand increasingly relies on migrant labour to fill both skilled and unskilled roles. The curriculum refresh presents an opportunity to better prepare New Zealand students, urban and rural alike, to step into these roles themselves.

Curriculum Reform and Early Exposure

The New Zealand Curriculum refresh, effective from 2026–2027, strengthens primary industry pathways through industry-led vocational subjects and closer integration with NCEA reforms. These changes aim to create clearer pathways into employment or further training and align practical and technical skills with industry needs.

However, for these reforms to succeed, foundational knowledge of the primary industries must be embedded across Years 0–10. Students cannot aspire to careers they cannot see. With most New Zealanders now living in urban environments and having limited exposure to food and fibre production, schools play an increasingly critical role in providing this understanding.

B+LNZ's Mandate

Ensuring the sheep and beef sector is supported by a capable, skilled, and future-ready workforce is essential to its prosperity and to national food security. B+LNZ therefore has a strong mandate to support education reforms that deliver curriculum outcomes aligned with the long-term needs of the sector and New Zealand's economy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Keeling".

Suzanne Keeling, PhD
Head of Science and Research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin Kirkpatrick".

Kristin Kirkpatrick, BTchg, DipAgribusinessMgmt.
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