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UNIVERSITY**  
Te Whare Pūrākau  
Learning, Teaching  
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# Agriculture Careers



# What is Agriculture?

**The agriculture sector accounts for a significant percentage of New Zealand's land use and land-based commercial operations lie at the heart of the New Zealand economy. New Zealand's rural places are populated with farms and businesses which supply products, services and knowledge to New Zealand and the world. To do this, the rural sector is supported by public and private sector enterprises, all of which need trained employees to operate. This makes agriculture the sector to realise any number of careers.**

Lincoln University students graduate ready for careers along the agricultural value chain - from farming to marketing, education to ecology, or science to finance.

Students of agriculture at Lincoln University can build on their interest of farming systems and the environment by tailoring their study of agriculture to commerce, science or agribusiness. The focus the degrees have on both commerce and technology is relevant to New Zealand's agricultural practices, the real-world application of which keeps the primary production sector both globally competitive and sustainable.



## Agriculture in New Zealand and the world

Both local and global demand for and production of food is expected to grow, with production facing an array of environmental changes and pressures (e.g., urbanisation, climate change, soil degradation). To provide for the needs of increasing populations, particularly in developing countries, agricultural leaders with technical expertise are sought-after on the world stage. With appropriate levels of training and industry experience, many graduates direct their career towards consultancy, management, production, research or strategic operations - all of which can start local, or take graduates global.

Agricultural systems are becoming increasingly large scale, and sophisticated. Technology and professionalism are transforming the industries and driving change at a rapid pace. From farming software systems to autonomous vehicles, more and more farming operations will see technology as a way to improve efficiency and sustainability. The uptake of technology requires both scientific data as the basis for sound decision-making, and professionals who can manage and facilitate the on-farm application of technology based practices.

In New Zealand, graduate recruitment has not kept pace with natural attrition rates (due to retirement), so the sector is expected to need many newly-trained employees with innovative ideas and a passion for the land. Lincoln University graduates are sought after for their ability to see the 'big picture' - from the specifics of production, to global trends. Presently there is demand for highly-skilled roles such as agricultural scientists, and for supervisory and management roles. Post-graduate study can further enable specialisation in a field of interest,

and give graduates a head-start in the employment market.

## Skills and knowledge developed by studying agriculture

The types of skills gained from studying agriculture are highly valued in the industry. Students develop agricultural knowledge around an area of focus, such as, agricultural science, agricultural commerce or agribusiness. The degrees are underpinned by a broad foundation of subjects giving students a range of knowledge areas to draw from in their careers. With farms now increasingly operating as businesses, many students are incorporating a commercial aspect into their degrees.

The applied nature of the coursework at Lincoln University gives graduates a range of practical skills that are transferable directly to the workplace. Lincoln University staff work directly with industry employers to provide students work experience with potential employers during the course of their study. Employers in the sector appreciate that Lincoln graduates come equipped with sector-specific skills and knowledge, as well as experience in agriculture and agribusiness practices.

Employers seek well-rounded, engaged graduates with a strong work ethic. As in any sector, employers typically value those who have a professional attitude to their work. This includes good communication (including the ability to communicate to groups, as well as effective interpersonal and written communication), respect, self-motivation, initiative, time management and flexibility. The importance of these basic skills cannot be underestimated, even in voluntary roles, as future job opportunities often arise from a good reputation and a varied network of contacts.

## Skills and knowledge valued in agriculture roles

Effective communication skills

Pastoral management skills

Knowledge of resource management and other legislation affecting farming

Interpersonal skills and the ability to interact professionally with a range of people

Knowledge of data collection and storage systems

Knowledge of water cycles, irrigation and reticulation systems

Skilled in 'big picture' thinking

IT skills

Knowledge of environmental systems

Knowledge of integrated farming systems and operations

Mathematical and analytic skills for experimentation

Undertaking and presenting research



## Where can agriculture graduates find work?

Careers are available along the agricultural value chain in cropping, sheep and beef, wool, meat, dairy, forestry and aquaculture sectors.

Places of employment for agriculture graduates include:

- Consultancy services (e.g., Franklin Group, Nimmo-Bell, The Agribusiness Group, FarmRight, Compass Agribusiness, DairyNZ)
- Government (e.g., Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), AsureQuality, Landcorp Farming)
- Finance and insurance (e.g., Rabobank, BNZ, ANZ, Westpac, FMG, Heartland Bank, NZX Agri)
- Exporting and marketing (e.g., Export NZ, NZ Trade and Enterprise, Miraka, New Zealand Shipping Federation, Fonterra, ANZCO Foods, Blue Sky Meats, Oceania Dairy)
- Self-employment or contracting (e.g., silage, baleage or vineyard services)
- Plant, equipment, and machinery (e.g., ICS Manufacturing, Holdem Cattle Handling Equipment, Agrac 2020, Carrfields)
- Weed and pest control (e.g., NZ Biosecurity Institute Inc., Target Pest Enterprises)
- Fertiliser and chemical industry (e.g., Ravensdown, Nutritech International)
- Grain and seed industry (e.g., NZ Seedlab, PGG Wrightson, Seedlands, Cropmark Seeds, Agriseeds, New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association)
- Meat, cattle, wool industry (e.g., Blue Sky Meats, Beef and Lamb, ANZCO Foods, Segard Masurel, Miraka)
- Education, training and recruitment (e.g., Lincoln University, NZ Qualifications Authority)
- Research (e.g., New Zealand Crown Research Institutes such as AgResearch, Plant and Food Research, or Landcare Research; Dow AgroSciences, Livestock Improvement (LIC))
- Processors and manufacturers (e.g., Fonterra, Talleys, Synlait Milk, Heinz Wattie's, Silver Fern Farms, Tegel Foods)
- Farm management (e.g., Dairy Holdings, Canterbury Holdings)
- Farmer and industry organisations (e.g., Federated Farmers)
- Livestock management (e.g., NZ Agribusiness Centre, Rural Solutions)
- Environmental and biological production organisations (e.g., Department of Conservation (DOC), BioGro New Zealand, Environmental Protection Authority)

## Agriculture job titles

Academic Lecturer	Import/ Export Officer
Account Manager	Irrigation Consultant/ Designer/ Engineer
Advisor	Laboratory Technician
Agribusiness Salesperson	Livestock Agent/ Representative
Agricultural Contractor	Livestock Identification and Business Support Specialist
Agricultural Scientist	Marketing and Sales Assistant/ Manager
Agricultural Technician	Media Spokesperson
Agri Manager	Nutrient Specialist
Agri-tourism Operator	Pastoral Manager
Agronomist/ Research Agronomist	Plant Breeding Technician/ Plant Breeder
Animal Health/ Nutrition Specialist	Policy Advisor/ Analyst
Assistant Production Specialist	Production Manager
Auditor	Productivity Officer/ Manager
Breeder	Project Manager/ Officer
Business Analyst	Research Assistant/ Manager/ Technologist
Communications Officer	Researcher
Consultant (Farm/ Agriculture/ Agribusiness)	Rural Agribusiness Banker/ Client Manager
Consulting Officer	Rural Insurance Broker
Customs Officer	Rural Property Valuer
Environmental Consultant	Sales Representative
Farm Accountant	Seed Production Technician
Farm Manager	Sharemilker
Farm Technician	Soil Nutrition Consultant
Field Services Representative (e.g., grains, chemicals, seeds, animal health)	Soil Scientist
Finance Officer	Stock Manager
Geneticist	Sustainability Specialist
Grower Liaison	Territory Manager
Head Shepherd	Wool Buyer/ Wool Classer
Human Resources Manager	



## Pay rate indications: full time equivalent (FTE) \$NZ per annum<sup>1</sup>

Most starting salaries for graduates of bachelor degrees fall between 50,000 - 70,000. Entry level jobs are stepping stones to roles with increased responsibilities and remuneration. Your employability is enhanced by all of your life experiences, be they employment related, or the transferable skills and competencies gained from community involvement, volunteer work, or previous work or study - all of which can grow competency, expand networks, and demonstrate enthusiasm to future employers.

In addition to the indicative rates shown, some roles offer performance based annual incentives, or other remuneration supplements (e.g., use of vehicle, health insurance).

<sup>1</sup> Rates sourced from SEEK, MBIE, Careers NZ, Universities NZ, PayScale, PQOS survey data

Job title	Indicative rate
Agribusiness Sales Manager	60,000 - 100,000+
Farm Technician/ Agricultural Technician	45,000 - 85,000
Agronomist	85,000 - 105,000+
Farm Manager	55,000 - 100,000+
Wool Classer	50,000 - 60,000
Agricultural Consultant	50,000 - 150,000+
Irrigation Engineer	65,000 - 100,000
Field Services Representative	55,000 - 120,000
Farm Environmental Consultant	50,000 - 150,000+
Rural Agribusiness Banker	55,000 - 145,000+
Agricultural Scientist	65,000 - 150,000+



## Agriculture tasks

Professionals working in the agriculture sector are expected to wear many hats in their day-to-day work. The following lists indicate tasks one might encounter as a consultant, agronomist and banker.

### a) Agricultural/ Farm Consultant

Early career farm consultants benefit from a broad knowledge of farming and environment systems. As careers in this field progress, developing a specialisation enables later-career consultants to hone technical skills in one particular area. The following table includes the types of tasks undertaken by farm consultants.

Understand and describe to clients the financial ramifications of farming decisions

Research and advise clients on farming operations

Assist clients with business and strategic planning

Research factors that affect crop production, pasture growth and animal breeding

Prepare feasibility studies and reports

Provide legislative advice relating to resource management

Design and implement risk minimisation strategies e.g., preparing for natural disasters, droughts, or pests and diseases

Prepare property management reports

Assess and report on farm viability

### c) Agronomist

During the course of their work, agronomists research and develop strategies to improve crop yields. The ultimate goal is to work scientifically to produce the finest crops, on the most consistent basis, for any situation. Agronomists may undertake the following tasks.

Research and develop strategies to improve crop yields

Conduct personal and telephone consultations with farmers

Examine and report on pest and disease issues affecting crops

Develop plans to combat crop or soil pests and disease

Make improvements to next generation crops

Crop budgeting, rotating and planning

Running trial programmes

Soil sampling

Make recommendations regarding fertiliser, seed and chemical applications

Irrigation scheduling

Study a farm's crop production

Discern best ways to plant, harvest, and cultivate plants

### b) Rural Banker

Rural bankers are recruited directly from university and have the support of mentors while they learn credit and banking systems. Once working directly with a portfolio of clients, rural bankers may undertake the following tasks.

Support rural customers with banking and finance needs

Develop and maintain good relationships with clients

Provide tailored financial advice to clients

Tailor-make complex lending packages for clients

Visit farms and/or rural businesses

Advise clients on meeting regulatory requirements

Meet sales targets

Prepare financial reports for clients, and for management

Calculate value of assets

Calculate and impose lending limits

Develop proposals for buying/selling farming businesses

Provide business formation advice

Job tasks are role-specific, so the above is an indication only. For more information on roles, registered Lincoln University students can search LU Career Centre (online) for job titles similar to those they are interested in. Job descriptions, including tasks and skills required, are often available.

## Industry bodies

Membership of an industry specific body enhances the professional status of graduates. By joining a professional body, members can research career options, access training and events, and network and collaborate with industry colleagues at all levels.

In some roles, registration with, or membership of, a professional body is compulsory.

Examples of agriculture industry bodies include:

Federated Farmers

[www.fedfarm.org.nz](http://www.fedfarm.org.nz)

Horticulture New Zealand

[www.hortnz.co.nz](http://www.hortnz.co.nz)

Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture

[www.rnzih.org.nz](http://www.rnzih.org.nz)

New Zealand Grasslands Association

[www.grassland.org.nz](http://www.grassland.org.nz)

New Zealand Agricultural and Resource Economics Society

[www.nzares.org.nz](http://www.nzares.org.nz)

The New Zealand Institute of Agricultural & Horticultural Science

[www.agscience.org.nz](http://www.agscience.org.nz)

Irrigation New Zealand

[www.irrigationnz.co.nz](http://www.irrigationnz.co.nz)

New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association

[www.nzgsta.co.nz](http://www.nzgsta.co.nz)

New Zealand Institute of Forestry

[www.nzif.org.nz](http://www.nzif.org.nz)

National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand

[www.bpsc.org.nz](http://www.bpsc.org.nz)

New Zealand Society of Soil Sciences

[www.nzsss.science.org.nz](http://www.nzsss.science.org.nz)

Beef and Lamb New Zealand

[www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com)

NZ Institute of Primary Industry Management

[www.nzipim.co.nz](http://www.nzipim.co.nz)



### Find out more:

#### Career Centre

Learning, Teaching and Library  
E: [lucarecentre@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:lucarecentre@lincoln.ac.nz)



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