

Beefing up our meat industry - Australia's national training system

Having a workforce with the right skills is vital to the success of Australia's \$17 billion meat industry.

Our meat industry is a global success story – we export to more than 100 countries, and are the world's largest exporter of goat meat, and the second largest exporter of beef and sheep.

For the meat processing sector - a mix of around 350 small, medium and large producers - to maintain its local and global success, it must comply with strict international compliance guidelines and safety standards. Vocational education and training (VET) offers employees the relevant skills, up to certification standard.

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Geoff Yarham has been involved in safety and training programs for more than 30 years and works as Senior HR Projects Manager for meat processor Australian Country Choice. The company is an exclusive supplier to Coles and a number of export customers, as well as employer of more than 1,200 Queenslanders. He knows just how important it is for businesses to have access to nationally recognised training, so employees and companies can continue to meet global regulations and safety standards.

"We are one of the most regulated industries in the country, with a strong focus on hygiene, animal welfare and individual safety," he said.

"It's important that our workforce has the right skills and knowledge, so we can continue to deliver high quality meat to consumers around Australia and internationally."

As a member of the Meat Industry Reference Committee (IRC), which provides advice to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) about the skills needs of the sector, Mr Yarham has provided input into developing national training packages to help address immediate workforce skills needs as well as how the industry can adapt to new ways of working associated with increased automation.

The impact of this partnership between industry and government is already evident to Jenny Kroonstuiwer of the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council, who says that Australia's nationally recognised training packages are putting us one step ahead of many other countries.

"We have one of the most comprehensive training systems in the world, with many countries trying to emulate what we do," she said.



"Our industry's qualifications give us an edge domestically and internationally, with auditors aware of the strength of Australia's training system.

"The responsibility and credibility attached to advice provided through the IRC is a major contributor to the current strength of our training packages."

But training isn't only relevant when it comes to exports or staff safety. According to Sandra Trevithick, Training Manager at meat processor and registered training organisation (RTO) Bindaree Beef, the meat industry is facing many challenges including responding to technological advancements.

"Technology is slowly impacting the industry – with new automated systems that mean people need to learn new skills to manage them," said Ms Trevithick.

"Our training system needs to be flexible so it can respond quickly to these types of challenges and needs."

Mr Yarham confirmed the IRC is responding to these evolutions.

"As new processing technology continues to be introduced, we will need to develop new units of competency to ensure people know how to use the machinery," he said.

"New job functions for operational employees such as process improvements and technical maintenance are indeed essential to take advantage of business investments in world-leading machinery."

Australia's meat industry

1,215 processing businesses

6,000 wholesalers and retailers

350,000 jobs

Off-farm beef and sheep meat industry valued at **\$17 billion**

Total **sales** turnover **increased 12 per cent** between 2012-13 and 2013-14

The AISC has also commissioned further work through the Meat IRC to develop an Animal Welfare Officer Assistant skill set to meet European Union regulatory requirements, further enhancing Australia's international competitiveness in this growing industry.

About the Australian Industry and Skills Committee

The Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) is an industry/government collaboration focused on simplifying and demystifying the vocational education and training (VET) system, amplifying the voice of industry and building employer's confidence in VET qualifications. The AISC advises Commonwealth and State and Territory Industry and Skills Ministers on the implementation of national vocational education and training policies, and approves nationally recognised training packages for implementation in the VET system. The AISC draws on advice from its network of Industry Reference Committees (IRCs), which are made up of people with experience, skills and knowledge of their particular sector. The IRCs work across industry to ensure their advice reflects the needs of employers.

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