



Meat Processing



Australia's reputation for producing high quality, wholesome and safe meat is built upon the skills and training of the 69,000 people that make up the meat processing workforce.

Bringing in more than \$45 billion each year, the sector makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy through its success in both global and local markets.

While COVID-19 has presented challenges throughout 2020-21, the industry is forecast to continue growing over the next five years.⁷

⁷ IbisWorld, 2021, 'Dead meat: Heavy declines in exports due to COVID-19 are causing revenue to fall', viewed August 2021, <<https://www.ibisworld.com/au/industry/meat-processing/90>>

Employs over 69,000
people

Contributes \$7.1 billion to
Gross Domestic Product

Revenue of \$45.2 billion

Source: IBISWorld Industry Wizard, 2021

Export over 70% of production, amounting to over \$15.9 billion annually, which is expected to grow by 2% each year up to 2026.

Source: IBISWorld, 2020, Australia Industry (ANZSIC) Report C1111: Meat Processing in Australia

The preferences of different markets are a key driver of industry skills needs across the sector, with increased interest in Australian game meat, growing demand for poultry products, and a strong market for halal products. Big data and increased automation are helping to make industry more efficient and sustainable. The skills of this workforce are integral to making sure Australians and the world have access to meat products that are nutritious and meet the needs of people from a range of cultures and lifestyles.

The national skills standards and qualifications for Australia's meat processing industry are overseen by the Meat Industry Reference Committee (IRC).



Skills Forecast

The current iteration of the AMP Australian Meat Processing Training Package is meeting industry needs well, even with the challenges of the pandemic. However, the potential of the training package is not being fully realised. As such, the Meat IRC is taking the opportunity to undertake a full review of the training package. This will mean a substantial transformation, with the aim of providing simpler training and broader job outcomes with greater transferability of skills. The review is proposed to be undertaken in three stages.

While COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the Australian meat processing industry, it has also emphasised the value of its supply chains and the robustness of food security in the sector. COVID-19 clusters associated with meatworks impacted the health of workers and their families and caused workforce interruptions. Specific precautions were taken by industry and at times were required by government to safeguard against potential outbreaks, including reductions to production during the stage 4 lockdown of greater Melbourne. Some employers are now reporting difficulty attracting and retaining workers due to these outbreaks and a lack of access to JobKeeper. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 on industry revenue, the value of agricultural exports is forecast to reach record figures in 2021–22, with beef export volumes forecast to grow by 8%.⁸

Global markets have been impacted by disrupted cargo transport and upgraded biosecurity restrictions imposed in some countries. While training was able to continue where it was taking place on-site at work, registered training organisations (RTOs) have had to shut classrooms during lockdowns across most states and travel by trainers and assessors has been limited. This has hampered completion of training and

apprenticeships. However, the Meat IRC are pleased with the flexibility and content of the training package which has supported industry throughout these challenging circumstances.

Project for 2021-22

The following project has been approved by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) for 2021–22:

Meat Processing Skills Review Project (Stage 1)

This project proposes a full review of the AMP Australian Meat Processing Training Package, to take place over three stages (approximately three years). Updates over the past five years have focused on specific industry needs in primarily niche areas. However, the broader training package requires updates to align with best practice in the VET system. The aim of this project is to review all 24 qualifications, 446 units of competency and 75 skill sets so they not only meet Training Package

Standards, but so they are more user friendly for employers, learners and registered training providers (RTOs). This work will reduce duplication across the training package, improve the ability for employers and learners to choose the appropriate program of learning, and will simplify RTO delivery. The first stage of this project is proposed to take place in 2021–22 and will include the review of all general meat processing qualifications and core units to create qualifications that can have specialist skills or job role streams added as they are developed. This will also allow for groupings of job roles at relevant AQF levels within single qualifications.

Stages two and three of this project will be considered after the completion of stage one. Stage two is proposed for 2022–23 and will focus on reviewing components based on identified industry sectors. Stage three is proposed for 2023–24 and will focus on reviewing the qualifications and skills standards relating to retail operations and specialist areas.



⁸ Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), 'In this section Agricultural overview: September quarter 2021', viewed September 2021, < <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/agricultural-outlook/agriculture-overview>>

Project Work Between 2020-21

Outlined over the following pages is a summary of projects managed by Skills Impact, with support from MINTRAC, between July 2020 and June 2021.

The Meat IRC oversaw the project development, as part of their responsibility to support engagement with their industry and to ensure the projects meet stakeholder needs.

The skills standards and qualifications updated as part of the following projects are expected to be endorsed by the AISC and State and Territory Ministers later in 2021.

Meat Rendering Project

Meat rendering and pre-rendering processes play a key role in the sustainability of the meat processing industry. Using unique skills, this workforce transforms animal by-products that would otherwise be waste into stable and useable material, such as food for animal and human consumption, fertiliser and other consumer products. As industry evolves, adopting new technology, equipment, terminology and practices, the skills required for this work are changing.

As part of this project, feedback was collected to review the qualification and skills standards for rendering and pre-rendering processes. They have been updated to reflect changes in industry operations, equipment and terminology, supporting the sustainability and safety of this vital sector within the meat processing industry.

Key Outcomes

- The Certificate III in Meat Processing (Rendering) has been redesigned to better align with the level of skills required for this work and amended to provide a more flexible choice of units for learners from a range of diverse rendering operations.
- Ten units in meat rendering have been revised and some of them merged, resulting in six final units.
- The meat rendering units have been

updated to reflect changes in the operations of a rendering process, such as batch rendering, continuous dry rendering and low temperature wet rendering; boiler operations; blood coagulation and drying; and tallow refining. The Performance Evidence in the Assessment Requirements were revised to remove unnecessary duplication and to provide users with greater clarity on the nature, volume and frequency of skills that an individual must demonstrate. Minor changes were also made to the Performance Criteria to differentiate food safety hazards and worker health and safety hazards.

- Two pre-rendering units have been updated to replace redundant terminology no longer used by industry and to reflect current training package standards.
- Three skill sets have been developed to capture the skills required for different types of rendering processes. This will support workplaces that have a need for skills in a particular type of rendering, such as small plants that only perform one kind of rendering process.

Meat Slicing Project

Operating meat slicing equipment safely and hygienically requires specific skills, which are used across a range of environments in the meat and food processing industries. Prior to this project the expertise for this work was supported by the unit AMPS207 Slice product using simple machinery, which was specific to the smallgoods sector and not accessible to workers using slicing equipment in other environments.

As part of this project, the unit has been reviewed and updated so that it is relevant to the various sectors that use these skills, including butchery,

small goods, retail, poultry and food processing. Updates have also been made to capture safety skills and use of manufacturer's settings, as well as personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitisation processes and knowledge of contamination and other faults that can create product quality risks. The performance evidence has been revised to remove unnecessary duplication and to provide greater specificity on the nature, volume and frequency of skills required.

The six skill sets which contain the unit were also reviewed to include the changes to the unit. Updates were also made to reflect changes to the unit in the qualifications. However, they were not reviewed beyond this, as they are due to undergo a full review as part of future projects.

Key Outcomes

- A unit for slicing product using simple machinery has been updated to reflect diverse work environments, safety and hygiene skills.
- Six skill sets updated to reflect changes to the unit.
- Minor changes to qualifications containing the unit to incorporate the updated unit.

Completed Projects

The following projects were endorsed by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC). The revised qualifications, skill sets and units of competency, that were developed as part of these projects, are published on training.gov.au and available for delivery by registered training organisations (RTOs).

Visit www.skillsimpact.com.au/completed-projects for further details.

Diploma and Advanced Diploma of Meat Processing Project

Strong management and leadership skills support the success of the Australian meat processing industry in domestic and global markets. Recent innovations in traceability and automation are changing the skills required by industry, as it strives to meet customer specifications and export requirements. It is important that people in high level roles are equipped to guide industry through these changes and take advantage of opportunities that arise.

Consultation took place throughout this project to review and update the Diploma of Meat Processing and Advanced Diploma of Meat Processing, which define the skills standards needed to effectively manage meat processing organisations and the sector more broadly. As a result, industry has access to the technical skills it needs to guide it into the future.

Halal Meat Processing Project

Demand for Australian halal meat is strong, with export trade currently valued at \$1.6 billion annually⁹ and expected to increase. Export to many international halal export markets requires certification, so that consumers know where meat is coming from, how it has been handled and whether it matches their religious beliefs. Previously, employees have needed to obtain halal certification from one of a

number of Islamic organisations in addition to possessing a meat processing qualification. This has caused challenges with consistency in Australian halal certification.

Thanks to the contributions of those involved in this project, national skills standards in halal meat processing have been developed. They describe the many specialist skills required for this work and will support the Australian meat processing industry as it moves towards a single Australian halal certification system and a unified training approach to halal meat processing.

Game Harvesting Auditing Project

Game meat undergoes a unique journey, making its way from individual harvesters or property owners to processing plants via mobile chillers or depots. This presents a different set of challenges to farmed meat products, requiring different quality control processes. Compliance is required throughout the supply chain, including skills to support humane harvesting and food safety standards. Regulations are in place for where and when certain game can be harvested, as well as harvesting quotas to keep the industry sustainable.

Previous to this project, skills for wild game harvesting were described in skill sets, components of which are requirements in most state licensing systems. However, skills standards were not available to ensure compliance in the transport of game meat via depots. Thanks to

the input of industry throughout this project, national skills standards were developed to support compliance with biosecurity and food safety regulations during this vital step of the journey. These skills are critical to ensuring meat is wholesome and safe for human consumption, supporting the reputation of Australian game meat to local and international markets.

Poultry Processing Project

Consumption of chicken is higher than any other meat in Australia, and its popularity is only on the rise, with consumption increasing by 33% per capita between 2008/09 – 2018/1910. Industry has become increasingly automated throughout the entire processing line as it works to meet this high demand, increasing the yield and efficiency of production, while also reducing the risk of cross-contamination and injury to workers carrying out repetitive tasks.

Thanks to the contributions of everyone involved in this project, current job roles and skills needs for poultry processing have been captured in ten new skill sets and four new units.

9 Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, 'Report, Third party certification of food', viewed August 2021, <https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Food_Cert_Schemes/Report/c02>

10 Australian Chicken Meat Federation, 2021, 'Facts and Figures', viewed August 2021 <<https://www.chicken.org.au/facts-and-figures>>