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12 DECEMBER 2021

# More skilled migrants coming to help keep economy humming

Agriculture

P. The Government has approved border class exceptions for key agricultural jobs including 200 mobile plant machinery operators, 40 shearers and 50 wool handlers, Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor announced today.

“We’ve approved these exceptions to support key autumn harvest requirements and relieve workforce pressures created by COVID-19,” Damien O’Connor said.

“We’ve also altered the existing class border exception for 200 dairy workers to remove the previous split of 150 assistant dairy farm managers and 50 dairy farm assistants. There’s huge demand for dairy farm assistants, so we’re providing more flexibility for our dairy sector to fill jobs up to the maximum of 200 where they see the strongest need.”

Damien O’Connor said the latest exceptions followed previous work to help the sector meet workforce needs.

“Shearing is a skilled trade and while the sector is working hard to attract and train new people this will help get our quality wool to overseas markets.

“Mobile plant machinery operators use large high-tech vehicles and are vital for the arable and horticulture sectors to get harvests in.

“I know there are still labour challenges across the sector and we will continue working with the sector to meet them where possible.

“Taking into account our most recent decisions, the primary sector has received more than 5,100 class exceptions since June 2020 – making it close to healthcare for the most industry exceptions.

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“Added to this we started one-way for quarantine-free travel for RSE workers in October. Combine that with the one-off pathway to residence now available to some 9,000 migrants working in rural New Zealand and we’re making progress.

“We’re continuing discussions with the meat sector on how to address their labour needs, particularly regarding halal slaughterers.”

The Government and the sector were working hard to attract people to the sector in a tight labour market.

“Our Opportunity Grows Here campaign continues to attract people to primary sector work and we’re backing training programmes, such as GoDairy, to get people into jobs.

“The sector has been resilient throughout COVID-19 and continues to get strong returns for its hard work. We will continue to provide support where required.

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“Providing this border exception is part of the next step in the Government’s carefully phased approach to reconnecting with the world.

“We’ve seen other countries open up too early and have to reverse decisions.

“We continue to seek a balance in our Reconnecting New Zealand programme, which minimises risks to our communities and health system, while supporting our economy,” Damien O’Connor said.



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