



# Migrant workers and the growth of dairy farming in Southland, New Zealand

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## Abstract

*The New Zealand dairy industry has undergone a substantial period of growth over the last ten years, as more sheep, beef, and crop farms have been converted to dairy farming. A major problem for dairy farm employers is sourcing quality and skilled New Zealanders to work on their farms. Migrant labour has been used to mitigate these labour shortages, but little is known about this increasingly vital component of the dairy industry.*

*Four researchers went to Southland in April 2012 to explore and understand the implications of migrant dairy farm employee labour force for New Zealand dairy farms and rural communities. The study highlighted Immigration New Zealand was the greatest problem facing dairy farm employers and migrant dairy farm employees, exercising the power to 'change the rules' at any time to replace skilled migrants with unskilled and unemployed New Zealanders. On farm training and induction practices have changed as greater numbers of migrant dairy farm employees are drawn to Southland, but effective communication between employers and migrants and proper training to use farm equipment, are areas of challenge for migrants'.*

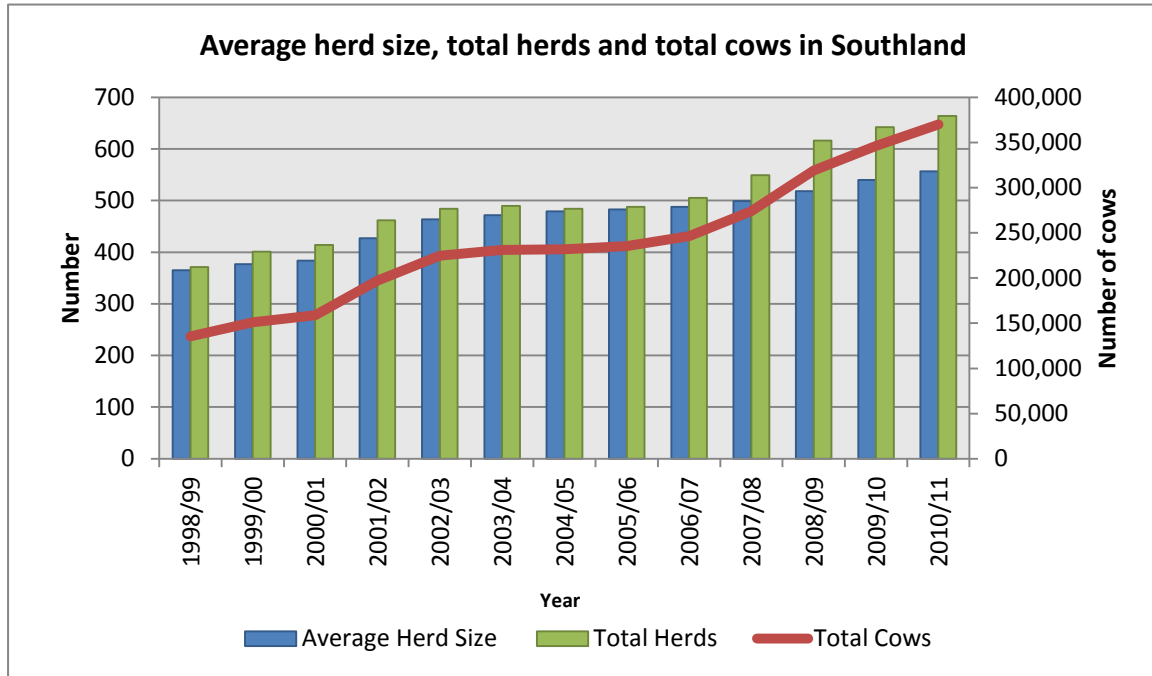
*There is a New Zealand wide perception that rural communities are welcoming, but the Southland community needs to be more accepting and open to the positives that migrant dairy farm employees are bringing to their communities. This research contributes to the understanding of the developing picture of a migrant dairy farm employee labour force in the New Zealand dairy industry, but more research needs to be completed to develop a comprehensive understanding of this area.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

"I remember someone saying 'we made a mistake in Southland, we should have shot the first North Island dairy farmer and we should have shot the first magpie'" (John, dairy farm employer).



**Figure 1: The growth of dairying in Southland (Source LIC, 1999-2011)**

Figure 1 illustrates the growth of dairy farming in Southland (LIC., 2011, LIC., 1999). This change was stimulated by prolonged periods of prosperity in the dairy industry, in comparison to continued lean times for sheep, beef, and arable farming, and by the introduction of irrigation to drier areas of the South Island (Rawlinson, 2011). South Island dairy farms differ from those traditional family owned and operated dairy farms in the North Island. Larger herd sizes in the South Island create the requirement for greater numbers of employees, but it is a struggle attracting and retaining skilled labour in the dairy industry. Some New Zealanders have had well publicised problems with drugs and alcohol, inexperience with farm positions, lack of skill, and reliability (Cropp, 2010). While some potential New Zealand employees have been 'put off' by these problems, and others related to rates of pay, long working hours, and inadequate treatment of employees by employers (Tipples, Trafford and Callister, 2010, Tipples and Morriss, 2002).

For dairy farm employers, there are insufficient New Zealanders available, or interested in, working on their dairy farms. Migrant labour is used to mitigate these shortages. Workers from South East Asia, Latin America and Western Europe have come to New Zealand to work in the dairy industry, either as temporary workers or as long term residents (Tipples and Lucock, 2004, Fegan, 2009). Migrant dairy farm employees are popular with dairy farm employers for exhibiting the following qualities: strong work ethics, conscientious nature, they are respectful, smart, humble, loyal, and reliable (Cropp, 2010, Human Rights Commission., 2008, Christie, 2011, www.stuff.co.nz., 2008).

Despite their popularity, it is known that some migrant dairy farm employees have been subjected to exploitation by employers and recruiting agencies. Cropp (2010) highlighted that migrants were paid minimum wages, lived in substandard accommodation, and had important documents (such as passports and qualifications) withheld. Problems of this nature led to the formation of an advocacy group for migrants in Mid Canterbury, to inform migrants of their rights in relation to employment and work practices (Cropp, 2010, Rawlinson and Tipples, 2012).

## 1.1 Research Method

There is a limited literature related to the understandings of migrant dairy farm employees in New Zealand, yet they are an increasingly vital component of the New Zealand dairy industry. It is against this background that the study is set. This exploratory study sought to understand the implications of a migrant dairy farm employee labour force for New Zealand dairy farms and rural communities. The following research questions were used to guide the research:

- What are the implications of the changing demographics in the dairy industry and how will specific areas be affected?
- What is happening in rural communities in dairy farming areas?
- What are the impacts of migrants on farm systems and their management?
- What are migrants' health, welfare and support needs, and are they being met?
- What are the training and support needs of senior dairy farm staff to facilitate the management of an ethnically diverse workforce?
- What are migrant workers experiences in the dairy industry – from their recruitment to their return to their home communities? Can the migration experience be improved to benefit employers, employees, sending and receiving communities and governments?

To answer these questions, the research team held three discussion groups in Southland (Figure 2) in April 2012. Two discussion groups were held with migrant dairy farm employees and one with dairy farm employers, all in Winton. In addition to this, an informal meeting with community advocates in Invercargill was held. The results of these discussion groups are presented and arranged around the migrants' experiences of the New Zealand dairy industry and include interactions with the community, impressions of services available, and immigration experiences.



**Figure 2: Map of Southland (Source: <http://www.nzstays.co.nz/pics/Southland%20Map.jpg>)**

To attract potential participants to the discussion groups, the research team thought it would be a good idea to publicise the events (see Appendix I for initial press release). Participation was helped by the contacts the researchers made with community advocates. Without these people it is very doubtful there would have been sufficient numbers for the discussion groups. The importance of researchers gaining contact with community advocates and community groups cannot be emphasised enough.

While in Southland, however, the leader of the research team was interviewed by a number of print media journalists. Instead of highlighting the purpose of the visit The Southland Times instead focussed on the negatives associated with migrant labour and dairy farming (see Appendix II and III for articles). These two articles generated a lot of comment on The Southland Times website<sup>3</sup> and in subsequent Letters to the Editor. For this reason, it is especially important to protect the identities of participants in this study. In the text, participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms; and any other identifying features in direct quotations have been removed and replaced with a generic title or pseudonym. Table 1 outlines the pseudonyms and the occupation of each individual.

**Table 1 Participants in the study**

Migrant Dairy farm Employees	Dairy Farm Employers	Community Advocates
Heath	Rhys	April
Pierce	Irene	Belinda
Martin	John	
Claire	Deb	
Nelson	Rebekah	
Macaulay	Mary-Kate	
Michelle		
Ryan		
Lacey		

## 2.0 Results

### 2.1 Learning of Opportunities in New Zealand

For the migrant dairy farm employees who participated in this study, the decision to come to New Zealand was not easy. These participants left behind family, friends, and what they know, to come to New Zealand and face many unknowns. So how did the migrant participants hear about the opportunities in the New Zealand dairy industry? For most, it was based around modern technologies such as the Internet and text messaging. Nelson was working on a dairy farm in Saudi Arabia when he talked to a New Zealand born veterinarian about the demand for labour in the dairy industry; *"when he came back here [to New Zealand] he just communicated with us information about New Zealand and how to come here [and] that is how we apply and come here"*.

Pierce and Ryan had friends who sent them text messages about the opportunities that existed in New Zealand. Ryan wanted to come to New Zealand and had the skills, but required practical dairy farming experience before he could qualify for a work visa, *"I came in 2009 as a dairy assistant [but] went to Saudi [Arabia] first . . . just looking for experience"*. Pierce (with the necessary experience and skills) learned of the opportunities in New Zealand through a friend who texted him about a recruitment agency recruiting Filipinos to work in New Zealand, *"[I just] opened the website and read about their information and watched a video of their dairy farming"*.

Experiences differed for participants who used recruitment agencies. Pierce had a very positive experience but Macaulay had a very different experience. Macaulay arrived in New Zealand in 2008, *"I signed a contract [in the Philippines], and that is not the right employer when I get here. So when I arrive here I am expecting that that's where I am going to go"*. But he was sent to a different employer. The recruitment agency then required money from Macaulay's employers, who passed this cost onto employees, *"he paid [recruitment agency] a lot of money [but] he paid that money off our wages and [recruitment agency] took from our wages"*

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/news/6814631/Immigrants-top-pick-for-farm-work> and <http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/news/6870226/Migrant-dairy-workers-have-tough-start-study-shows>

as well. We [were] earning not as much as we were expecting". However, Pierce thought by the same recruitment agency was better:

*When I arrive here they provided me with everything, the training AgITO Level 2 (milk quality), then farm exposure and then they house me for one week in their training course centre here. [Then] before they sent us off to the farm they gave us our wet weather gear, our beddings, one hundred dollars for groceries [and] that really made us ready.*

Pierce is aware of the many Filipinos who are queuing to work in New Zealand and have naively paid the fees suggested by recruitment agencies. If he had the opportunity, he would like to return to the Philippines and, "conduct an orientation" with interested Filipinos about the New Zealand dairy industry and how to apply for a work visa:

*I just pity those other people who pay more and also they would end up in very bad employers. Those are people who usually hire from overseas, there are those who are not nice to work with. If only I had the chance, I would like to conduct an orientation in the Philippines because there are so many immigration advisors that are unlicensed there. They are charging a lot of fees . . . It's a big business in the Philippines, but you know if those people are not rich there, why have them experience sell their properties and land and acquire loans just to pay the charges for migrating to NZ. You can get some advice for free on the immigration website.*

Popular reasons for coming to New Zealand for our participants included the better education and lifestyle opportunities in New Zealand. But Martin was motivated by the desire to have a career that would take him places. In the Philippines, Martin found it difficult to secure employment with as many as 1,500 people applying for one job. Once employment was secured, they would stay there for a lifetime:

*My friends work in the same office [and] you can see pictures of them when they are young and they are still in the same place. They are still struggling with the same things that they were 30 to 40 years ago. This is not acceptable for us and that's why we love New Zealand. You put in the sweat and the hours, and if you play things right, you will get where you want to go.*

### 2.1.1 Arriving in New Zealand without families

A common theme for migrants in this study was for males to arrive in New Zealand without their families; wives and children remained in the migrants' country of origin for up to two years, and some still remain there. Macaulay, Pierce, Nelson, Martin and Ryan arrived without their families. Martin remembers calling his wife often, after he had arrived "the first eight months here in New Zealand was hell. I called my wife back at home and sometimes I was crying". Martin's wife joined him after 12 months, initially to see what New Zealand was like, "I came just for one month, just to see [what it's like]. I came here in winter . . . he [my husband] said 'if you can take that, come back and stay for good'", and she did.

For Macaulay, separation from his family was difficult and he admitted, "I struggled without my family". This separation combined with the treatment he received from his employer and recruitment agency, meant Macaulay returned to the Philippines after 12 months. Macaulay was convinced his future was in New Zealand and three months later returned with his family, "when I came back [to New Zealand] I was pretty happy, my family and my one year old son are with me". Nelson and Pierce brought their families to New Zealand after 18 months, but so far, Ryan has not been able to get his wife to New Zealand "I have a wife [and] when my wife [first] applied for her visa, it was declined. They are very strict [and] we are just reapplying [at the moment]". Claire's partner's work visa was declined in 2009 and she was forced to leave:

*In total, I worked in Southland for nearly five years, in my last job as a herd manager I worked for three years at the same farm and already had my own cows and heifers. My next step was to get into contract milking, then I met a guy from Uruguay [and] fell in love. He was there on a work and holiday visa and worked on [the] dairy farm as well. When the visa was about to run out my former boss agreed to employ him, but there was no chance of getting his visa, as immigration service required two years' experience [and] because I wanted to stay with this man, I had to sell my stock in 2009 and leave.*

Michelle's experience differs from those outlined above. She arrived in New Zealand without her husband to work in the city. Michelle's husband eventually joined her, but was unable to find employment in the city until he received a text message about a job opportunity in Southland, on a dairy farm. Michelle's husband took the job in Southland and this would eventually enable them to stay in New Zealand. Michelle was unable to renew her work visa when it came up for renewal and instead applied as part of her husband's work visa:

*I came here to work in rest home for one year and then my husband followed me . . . my husband got an interview [in Southland] and then after one year I followed him. Before [this] I was the principal [visa holder] because I worked as a care giver, but when you renew your visa as a caregiver, they will not renew it [and] that is why we changed it. My husband is now the principal working on dairy farm.*

Irene knew that it is easier for wives and children to get their visas approved, than it was for husbands who were working in the dairy industry:

*It is actually easier for the women to get a work permit than the men, because the women get a work permit based on the husband's work permit. If the husband has a two year work permit, the wife automatically has a work permit if she applies for it based on husbands work permit. She will get it for as long as he has it.*

Migrants preferred for their families to remain in their country of origin until they secured family housing or were financially secure. Dairy farm employer participants can now see that it would be better if families came to New Zealand together. John explains:

*Really looking back you probably should encourage that the family comes as well, that's probably immigration. It would be a far better outcome on our farms if we had families there . . . [so] they have got nothing else to think about, they might think of wife and children at home, if they have the children here and they are focussed on the job.*

While our dairy farm employer participants thought that it was a good idea for families to be together in the beginning, the limited financial resources or uncertainty over whether New Zealand was where they should be, may prevent this. A number of dairy farm employer participants admitted that they had helped bring the families of their migrant workers to New Zealand:

*"We lent him money for him to fly his family [to New Zealand] but he paid us back" (Deb, dairy farm employer)*

*"We helped our Sri Lankan guy bring his family over and our one Filipino his children were over there [in the Philippines] and we helped him with his paperwork to get the children here" (Irene, migrant and now dairy farm employer).*

As Ryan is now finding, while dairy farmers suggest it is easy to get wives or family into New Zealand, it is not easy. Other migrant participants explained it was difficult getting family members to New Zealand, just for a visit. Heath wanted his mother to come to Southland to visit, but after repeated applications, they were declined and the family could not understand why. Eventually Heath went to local Minister and Member of Parliament, Bill English to understand the problem and he explains what happened:

*Of the extended family, we are currently struggling with immigration. It is a nightmare to try and get my parents to visit. Just to visit [for two months]. . . we tried for my mother in law and we ended up going through Bill English office to try and get her here . . . it's because she doesn't have a job, her husband is like, they say, they view as someone who is coming to stay and not go back. It really puts that homesickness into pressure.*

## 2.1.2 Modern Communication

Dairy farm employer participants could not imagine how difficult it would be for their migrant employees in New Zealand. Rhys explained he, *"would hate to be them, it must be an absolute nightmare"*. Despite this, John feels that modern migrants are luckier than migrants who arrived in Southland 150 years ago. Modern migrants have the benefits of technologies such as Facebook, Email, and Skype; whereas earlier arrivals had letter writing:

*Let's think about our forefathers who came to New Zealand on ships and thought 'we are never going back to this country [England] and a letter would take three months [to reach England]. Today things can take 24 hours to London and email [is] basically pretty quick. Can't you just imagine how those people felt when they arrived on ships? It's hard for people to come to New Zealand . . . [but] we are probably luckier than our forefathers.*

Modern methods of communication do make it easier and faster for migrants to communicate with family or friends in their country of origin, but is it expensive. Skype and Facebook require a broadband connection. Participants explained that in some places of Southland, broadband is not available, *"we don't get broadband anyway, you have to pay three hundred dollars for a satellite . . . telecommunications should be easy, but not enough people live on our road"*. Migrant dairy farm employee participants were asked if they felt their internet was expensive. Internet costs *"thirty five dollars a month"*, but it is texting and calling that is expensive. Table 2 outlines the cost to call and send text messages to the Philippines; however, text messages are not guaranteed to reach their destination<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 2 Call and text costs to the Philippines**  
(Source: [www.vodafone.co.nz](http://www.vodafone.co.nz), [www.2degreesmobile.co.nz](http://www.2degreesmobile.co.nz), [www.telecom.co.nz](http://www.telecom.co.nz))

Phone network	Text costs	Calling cost
<b>Telecom</b>	30 cents prepay 20 cents monthly plan	\$1.43 per minute
<b>Vodafone</b>	20 cents monthly plan 31 cents prepay	\$2 for 60 minutes to landline \$1.43 per minute after that
<b>2 Degrees</b>	9 cents	44 cents a minute

## 2.1.3 Adapting to New Zealand lifestyle and climate

"[We have a] saying in Africa, we are two hours ahead of London, so what's the rush?"

During her first two years in New Zealand, Irene found it very hard to adapt to the speed and style of living. She came from a household with maids and adjusting to completing these tasks themselves was a big challenge:

*We have had maids in the house and doing everything for us. When we came here we had to do everything ourselves. [Some] men still have the mindset of someone else doing the job, but it's us now [and] it is a big thing, [a big] culture shock to come here and it's different.*

Irene knows she did not fully adjust to New Zealand for two years *"the first two years were really hard. I don't think I adapted to New Zealand until after two years we had been here, it's just different [from home]"*.

Apart from homesickness and missing family or friends who remained in their country of origin, another common struggle in Southland was related to the climate, *"it's very cold when I arrive"*. Filipino migrants explained they were used to a climate and daily temperatures very different from what they found in Southland; *"in summer [the temperature is] 32 degrees . . . [and] humid [but] what is good, even at 32 degrees, you can go outside and not get sunburnt. Here, even if it is 18 degrees you get sunburnt"*. Migrant dairy farm employees arriving in June or July also had little knowledge or experience of how to keep themselves or their homes warm. Martin explains his first week in Southland:

<sup>4</sup> Viber is a new application that is available to smart phone users with iPhones, Android or Windows Live compatible phones, the service is free and uses internet data rather than phone credit (see: [www.viber.com](http://www.viber.com)).

*[The] first week was cold because we didn't know how to light the fire, which is quite silly when you think about it, but quite sensible when you really think about it, [we've] come from a tropical country [and] we had the wrong clothes.*

Other migrant dairy farm employees are unaware of the tendency for Mother Nature to produce 'four seasons in one day':

*When one of our guys first came to New Zealand, he was told to go and get the cows in. So he went and got the cows in the afternoon and of course it was your typical Southland day. It was a beautiful day when he took off and he experienced four seasons before he got back. He bloody near died because he just took off in his t-shirt (Rhys, dairy farmer).*

Perhaps in recognition of the climate differences between New Zealand and the Philippines, dairy farm employer participants noticed that migrant dairy farm employees liked to wear a lot of clothes when they were milking cows, even on warm Southland days:

**"Irene:** *it is 30 degrees outside, they keep wrapped up . . . have you seen the Filipinos and Sri Lankans, they milk with their wet weather gear and their beanies*

**Deb:** *our guy wears three layers under his wet weather gear and [my husband] said how can you do that?"*

#### 2.1.4 Provision of household equipment and quality of homes

Martin's experience of his first week in Southland provides an indication that sometimes migrant dairy farm employees are not told what to expect in New Zealand. They arrive with nothing more than a suitcase. Rebekah recognising that migrant workers would not know what to expect purchased a variety of winter clothing and other essentials for her incoming migrant dairy farm employee:

*He is a good worker and he is worth it . . . I bought [him] socks, thermals and absolutely [everything] because I knew he was coming from 33 degrees and coming out here in June. He arrived when we were flying out to Australia for two weeks, but I even left a box of chocolates and a welcome card and those sorts of things, that went down really well.*

Opinions, however, differed amongst our dairy farm employer participants whether providing clothing and other household equipment was a good idea. Deb had provided her migrant dairy farm employee with a household of second hand equipment, but found; *"I don't know if [it] was just our worker, but we thought he wanted these handouts all the time"*. When this employee moved to another farm to be closer to his friends, Deb provided the household equipment to him as his bonus:

*When our [migrant] left us, we said you can have all of the stuff that we have provided for you as your bonus, so he could take that with him to his new farm. We didn't feel that anybody else would be, wanting to provide him with house contents.*

Irene would not provide any household equipment for any of her migrant dairy farm employees; *"we had come [to New Zealand] ourselves and no one provided us with furniture. There was some that helped us a lot, but none said 'there's a fully furnished house'"*. As dairy employers, Irene finds some potential migrant dairy farm employees expect to have a fully furnished house as part of their employment package; *"[one] came for interviews and the first thing they asked is 'do you supply a house furnished?'"* The local community identified that the growing migrant community require second hand furniture and equipment; a room in Winton is dedicated to second hand household equipment for migrants. During this discussion, male voices were very noticeably absent and Heath admitted his wife *"takes care of that stuff"*.

The standard of housing for migrant dairy farm employee participants differed. Lacey arrived to find her new home had not been cleaned and was very dirty, *"at the start it was a big shock, the house was quite cold, but was very dirty [and] full of rubbish and dead birds and had not been cleaned for six months"*. Lacey lived elsewhere while her house was cleaned. Pierce's family now live in a wooden house that is heated by a heat pump and to save on electricity costs during the winter months, the family lives and sleeps in one room. Nelson has been somewhat luckier than Lacey and Pierce. Although he lived initially in shared accommodation, he eventually moved, *"when the boss built a new house on the farm, we moved into his house [and] I am in a*

*very good house now*". Figure 3 is an example of the type of housing we found for dairy farm employees in Southland.



**Figure 1 Example of dairy farm employee housing in Southland (Source: Don Frenley)**

With migrant dairy farm employee participants arriving in New Zealand without their families, it can also mark the first time they live by themselves, or in homes that are quite different from what they are used to. Deb thought her migrant dairy farm employee was one of these people:

*We had given him a cottage to live in and it was basically the first time he had lived by himself and he found that hard. He was out in the country and that was a bit of a strain [and] I don't think he was used to living by himself.*

Pierce explains the differences he found between rural New Zealand and living in an urban area of the Philippines:

*In the Philippines, you can have access to any entertainment almost for free [and to] socialise [you] just go out in your backyard because there are so many people there. Here [in New Zealand] if you go out in your house, there is no one you can see.*

To ease the pressures of living alone, Deb offered to complete her migrant dairy farm employee's supermarket shopping for him; whilst Rebekah paid the electricity bill and offered Sky Television to her migrant dairy farm employee. Rebekah quickly realised that this situation could not continue and explains:

*The one mistake that we made we offered to as part of the wage package to pay for Sky television, which was fine, every time he got a movie he offered to pay [but] the power account was a huge issue. His house was a little house, but the power accounts were nothing short of \$500 [to] \$600 a month, but he's really, really, really clean. He would have three showers a day, so that is fine, but it's the heater going all year round with the window open because he wanted fresh smell. In the end we just actually increased the wage package by \$7000 and covered everything and [it] was still a pay increase, but meant he was still responsible [for power]. His power account is now \$180 [group laughter]. [In comparison] our power account with a large house and a spa and stuff was \$350.*

From her experience, Deb felt it was a good idea to help migrants at first with these costs, but migrant dairy farm employees needed to take responsibility of household bills; *"it's very important that they are responsible for it [paying bills] because otherwise they just abuse the privilege"*. But as Irene rightly points out, migrants may, *"have never had to pay for it and probably never knew what it was"*.

## 2.2 Training migrant dairy farm employees

An area the research team wanted to understand related to the training requirements for migrant dairy farm employees. The opportunities for learning about farm equipment and processes of learning about farm equipment varied for participants. Dairy farm employer participants were asked if they had different processes in place for migrant dairy farm employees and New Zealand born employees. Rhys identified that this may have been the case five years ago, but with a greater population of migrant dairy farm employees on farms in Southland this was no longer the case. New migrant dairy farm employees could be taught by other migrants on the farm or friends on nearby farms. Rhys explains his experiences:

*Five years ago we were employing from Uruguay and South America, and that was almost a cold start and so it was quite, the recruitment process and induction, it was very structured process that we went through. We find we don't nearly to the same extent, because we have a number of people in my team [who can do it for me]. It's not just migrants, it's much easier now because for example the guys from the Philippines, he can speak to someone from the Philippines who is working for us already and they have an immediate understanding.*

## 2.2.1 Training for using farm equipment

While it was expected that employees may spend the first weeks becoming acquainted with farming or dairy shed processes, Pierce knew of a migrant dairy farm employee who, *"the following morning [after arriving in New Zealand] they are supposed to work and they still have jet lag"*. Pierce was provided with a seven day induction by his recruitment company learning about the New Zealand dairy industry. Martin, on his first day, was taught how to put cups on and take cups off and that is *all* he learned for the next eight months:

*[I] worked as a dairy assistant and got shat on a dozen times on my first morning, I had a hell of a boss . . . I cupped 1400 cows on a 50 bail rotary by myself, that is about five hours milking in the morning and four hours at night, 10 [to] 11 hours a day on an 11 [and] 3 roster . . . : it wasn't supposed to be that hard, you are supposed to share that load with two or three other people. But the second day he stuck us with cups on and they left and that was it for the rest of the eight months. All I learnt was how to milk cows and how to milk cows!*

Martin's further learning was limited by his New Zealand born employers who were, *"high half the time or drunk the other half"*. With the benefit of hindsight, Martin would not change anything about this first experience. These New Zealanders taught Martin what *not* to do as an employer and an employee. Martin explains his next job *"was 1250 [dairy] cows through a 60 [bail dairy shed] and I could do that with my eyes closed"*.

Migrant dairy farm employee participants did not feel that they received adequate training for using farm equipment. Martin felt that dairy farm employers expect migrant workers to know how to use motorbikes as second nature, but they need to remember, *"we didn't grow up here, quad [bikes] and tractors, these things are new to us"*. From his experience, Rhys has learned to watch migrants when they first use farm equipment to ensure they are using them correctly, *"[when you ask] all those things like can you drive [they say] yeah, yeah, [but] you have to see them drive motorbikes and so forth"*. Nelson explained he had used a motorbike in Saudi Arabia, but it was quite different to the one he was using in New Zealand, *"[we] have Honda 70 cc and here it is about 250 cc [there is a] big difference"*. Once they have the right training, migrant dairy farm employees were proud, *"[we] can do it easy, we can do it by ourselves"*.

A common complaint from migrant dairy farm employees was in relation to the use of tractors. Nelson felt his employer was deliberately limiting his opportunity to progress his career by not allowing him to use the tractor, *"he trusts you with the cows, but I don't see why he can't trust you with the tractor"*. Martin could understand the frustrations of migrant dairy farm employees *and* why dairy farm employers would not let migrants use tractors. Martin, now in his capacity as a sharemilker, could not afford to pay to fix machinery that was broken by his employees. He had learned from his previous mistakes:

*I left the [tractor] door open and not even five seconds later, the cow smacked it's head on it. The boss said 'I hope you have learned your lesson because it is a very expensive lesson to make'. Insurance covered it, but it was \$2,000.*

However, Irene feels that it is the dairy farm employers own fault if breakages occur. She cites the numerous training opportunities that are provided by DairyNZ and AgITO for employees to learn how to safely and correctly operate farm equipment:

*I think it's the farmers own fault if they let them on gear that they are not trained for. We wouldn't let our staff drive the tractor if they can't drive the tractor. DairyNZ has a lot of health and safety courses that staff can go to, motorbikes and tractor courses, those things are out there and we pay our staff to go to it. I just think if you don't train them, you can't expect them to know.*

There is also a Health and Safety Employment Act requirement to train employees doing hazardous work or using dangerous equipment. It is helpful if dairy farm employers provide clear and concise instructions for migrant dairy farm employees. Pierce explains how his employer taught him how to do the plant wash; *"the first day, this is how you do it, then the next time he told me 'you try to do it and I will watch' and then he do it a week watching me until he satisfied"*. Irene has these instructions clearly written in the dairy shed to avoid costly mistakes:

*[We have] clear and concise instructions [and] we have all our washing procedures and everything is up for them to see . . . anyone can come in there and be able to do it, it's got to be as simple as possible for them to understand it.*

## 2.2.2 Communicating in English and misunderstandings

Whether or not dairy farm employers provide clear and concise instructions, there still seem to be misunderstandings between employers and migrant dairy farm employees. For our participants, these misunderstandings revolved around a lack of understanding or knowledge of New Zealand English and slang words. The best examples of such misunderstandings are presented below:

*The farmer would tell [my husband] can you go take the hose and do the concrete? We didn't know [what it was] because we talk about a yard. We didn't know what a vat<sup>5</sup> is [either], the only one we know in South Africa is your GST [group laughter] . . . I know just a while ago a farmer told a migrant worker, [I'm] not sure where from 'shoot the bulls up to that paddock' and that guy actually physically shot all the bulls (Irene, migrant and dairy farm employer).*

*He [my boss] told me to get the top of the bonnet of the car. So I went to the car looking for a beaney, same with the boot, he said 'can you pop the boot and bring out the spare tyre'. I couldn't understand what a boot had to do with a spare tyre! (Martin, migrant dairy farm employee)*

Some Filipino participants indicated they had a good understanding of American English, but it is quite different from New Zealand English. Martin felt that his employer thought he was an idiot, because he could not quite understand what he was saying:

*I said to him 'you think I am stupid don't you?' He said no, no. I told him 'let's have it all out, you think I am stupid and slow'. He said 'yeah kinda'. 'Why do you think that?' 'Every time I ask you to do something it's always messed up, you do it but it's never done properly'. 'That's because when you ask me to do it, you are talking too fast! I am not from here, I can understand and speak American English'. I told him I can't understand your accent.*

Migrant dairy farm employee participants felt some misunderstandings were caused by employers who, "speak too fast and they mumble or don't face them [or] use ambiguous terms". As a way to interpret and understand employer's instructions, participants used notebooks or sent text messages to their employers. In cases where they did have problems, they were not afraid to say, "pardon me please speak slowly so I can understand".

Part of the problem on dairy farms stems from farmers' inability to communicate with their employees. John admitted that he has difficulty with having to instruct his employee what to do constantly and now he has also taken a holiday, it is quite nice without him. Deb and Rebekah have recently completed a communications paper offered by AgITO and suggest that they were not the ones who should have undertaken the course:

*[The paper is] fantastic and they go over communication so much, but probably 90 per cent of people sitting in that room shouldn't be sitting in that room. But it's the husband who should be in there, since he does all the communicating with staff.*

Getting dairy farmers to realise they have a communication problem and getting them to do these papers would be a problem. Irene suggested "you need to advertise a big free lunch with lots of beer, come, and listen to whatever and then all the men would be there and you could do a workshop".

Dairy farm employer participants felt that it was important that all migrant dairy farm employees could speak and understand English in the workplace. Of the migrants who attended our discussion groups, 70 per cent could converse well with us, but it was clear that others only had a very basic understanding of English. One participant was reliant on his fellow countryman to translate what we were saying to him. Macaulay was employed on a farm with five other Filipinos, and the only New Zealander was the boss, making it very difficult to learn English. Some employers are finding that this is a common situation throughout Southland; "Filipinos will only work where there is another Filipino, again they want to be able to speak and fit into that [but] they are not going that extra mile to fit into the Kiwi language". In order to ensure that situations such as Macaulay's do not occur and employees learn English, Rhys employs migrant workers from a range of nationalities, "our policy is such that you learn English on the job. Part of what encourages them is we don't have immigrants from all the same country".

The problem we identified at these discussion groups was that the need for English language lessons comes from migrant dairy farm employees on work visas. It is not until these migrants gain a Permanent Resident

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<sup>5</sup> VAT in South Africa is value added tax

Visa (PR) that English language lessons are government funded. In order to fulfil the criteria for PR, migrant dairy farm employees need to prove that they can speak and understand English. For any migrant with a tight budget (such as Pierce) or living on a clustered dairy farm (such as Macaulay) they can find it difficult to access English lessons. English Language Partners operates an English class in Winton, but finding a time and date to suit all migrant dairy farm employees is difficult. Macaulay's employer recognised that it was important for employees to learn English and booked them in for a day long lesson. But on the day of the lesson, there was too much farm work to do, so they were unable to go to the class. It was not rescheduled.

Continuously speaking English is required for migrant dairy farm employees to fully understand and learn English and Heath recognises that, *"if they don't practise [English] they will never understand"*. Deb employed her migrant dairy farm employee's wife to help with calf rearing and it helped to improve her English, *"she spent a lot of time talking [with me] and she really appreciated that"*. Lacey has recognised she has some limitations with English and plans to hire a New Zealander to improve her English. While these dairy farmers have taken the initiative to help their migrant dairy farm employees, John believes there is an opportunity for the wider community to help migrant dairy farm employees learn English, *"there is probably an opening for our schools to do an after school with these families and wives or girlfriends"*.

While dairy farm employer participants felt that it was important for migrant dairy farm employees to understand English, they did not think it should be part of the criteria for gaining a work visa:

*My concern is that we take the message away today that they need to speak English before they come here. For god's sake they come here and they learn English so that they, that's probably more the employer side. If you don't learn English you don't get residency, I'm happy with that, [it] is probably a fair [criteria]. I'm happy with that as a threshold, but I would hate to think that out of this discussion comes they need to speak English before they get here (Rhys, dairy farm employer).*

### 2.2.3 Innovative ideas to improve training

In order to improve the integration of migrant dairy farm employees into farm systems, two of our participants have suggested changing the traditional period in which employees are employed. For the New Zealand dairy industry, June 1<sup>st</sup> is the traditional day when employees, dairy cows, and possessions move to new places of employment. Irene has suggested that new employees should instead be employed in January, a time of relative calm and quiet on the dairy farm. This would enable migrants to learn about milking cows and farm systems before calving in August, as Heath says, *"[before] you start yelling at them, it's not intentionally, it's the pressure that comes in August"*. Irene elaborates further on her idea:

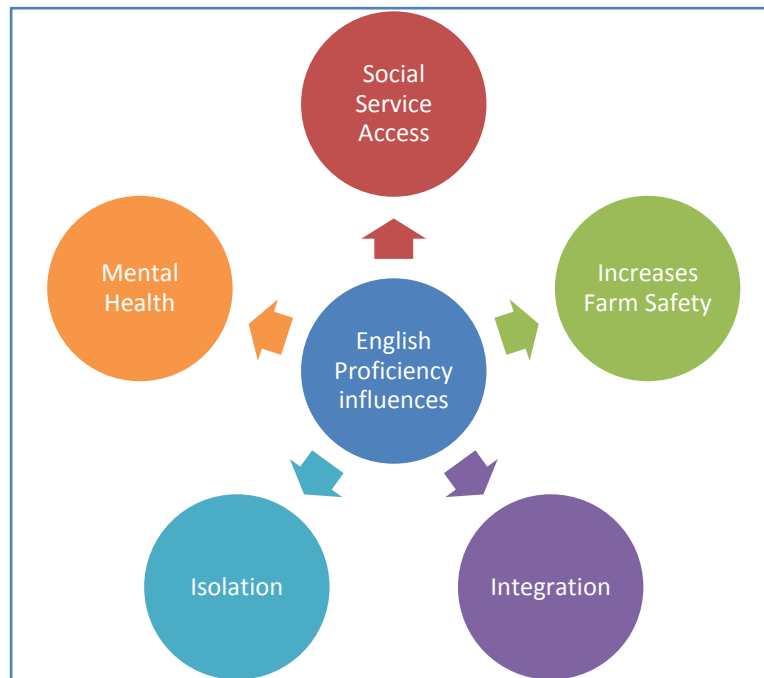
*The dairy industry start [date] should be in January when you employ new staff. It's the most stable time of the year, but they come in June 1<sup>st</sup> and it's all nice and quiet on the farm, the cows are all dried off, it's all relaxing times and then suddenly calving starts in August and it's all on and late nights. Unfortunately at those times it is busy, [for] someone who has no experience with milking, now it's calving and it's stressful and you have to teach them to actually milk cows and its colostrums and penicillins and those things; whereas if you come in January, it's normal relaxing normal time, a non-stressful time on the dairy farm.*

As an alternative to starting in January, Nelson suggested that newcomers should shadow their employers for the first two weeks of their employment. This would enable new employees to learn about their position and employer's personalities:

*When you come to New Zealand, you find the Rotary [dairy shed] is a bit complicated. It's good to understand [and] see what's going on, if you arrive a fortnight before you could just see what is going on . . . you [also] learn what he [employer] likes and what he dislikes.*

## 2.3 Community Integration and Acceptance

A community advocate highlighted that understanding English and having the confidence to converse with people in the community, underpins a migrant's social integration into a rural community. Figure 4 illustrates that knowing how to speak English underpins a migrant's ability to access social services and integrate into the community, which in turn reduces social isolation and influence of this isolation on mental health and farm safety.



**Figure 2 The multiple influences of English Proficiency for migrant dairy farm employees (Source: adapted from Belinda, Community advocate)**

### 2.3.1 Are migrants and accepted part of the Southland community

We asked participants in all our discussion groups if they felt an accepted part of the Southland community. A number of New Zealanders did not feel they were an accepted part of the community. John felt an outsider when he moved three miles up the road, "even though my wife came from that area, I was an outsider coming from three miles away". Mary-Kate moved to Southland from the Waikato 10 years ago. At this time, the community held a very negative perception of dairy farmers; who they felt were responsible for inflating land prices, changing landscapes, and communities. Mary-Kate tried to involve herself in community activities but was not welcome on the local swimming committee. Irene had no trouble fitting into the Southland community:

*We've had no problems, we have lots of great friends, I don't think we have had any problems really. We get a long great with Kiwis, we have two Kiwi born children and this is our home now. No we have never had any issues really, but I do, I know that some people say don't talk your language when we are here, we have to be constant, when Kiwis are around we talk English, we make a constant effort. That is just respect and we haven't had any problems, we think we are part of the community. I didn't feel out at all, no.*

Whereas Heath feels he will always be perceived as, "an immigrant". He feels this way because of his skin colour, but this is something that his family is learning to accept:

*We have come through the industry and own our farm. But every now and then someone would ask me 'who do you work for?' It's the most common question I get asked. So we have learnt to accept that physically we are immigrants and we are always going to stand out.*

This trend continued for our migrant dairy farm employee participants. Macaulay felt his employer was supportive of his family and other employees, but the wider community, "not very often". April, as a community advocate, has tried to engage migrant dairy farm employees with community based activities. But has found it very difficult and attracted little interest from migrants. She proudly told us of her success with a Nepalese family, who were the sole attendants at a 'Learn how to plant vegetables' day. For Pierce, his reasons for not becoming involved with the community are based on his family's budget. There are no additional funds available for family members to become involved in sports or other community activities:

*I still feel isolated because I am working alone with my family and my earning is not enough for leisure, so I don't have really the budget for the petrol to go around and mingle. I can't support my kids to support kids, so I cannot bring them and I cannot pay for the club fees . . . but I allow them to join school activities aside from that, we can't afford it any more.*

Some community members felt migrant dairy farm employees were 'not putting into the community what they take out'. A community advocate cited cases of migrant children being provided with second hand school uniforms, when New Zealanders had the same level of need, but were ignored. Mary-Kate had heard complaints from New Zealanders who felt that the needs of migrant children were taking away the teaching time for their children. Community members felt that any additional income that Filipinos had, was not spent in the community, but sent home to the Philippines; a process that is very important *culturally* for Filipinos (Frazer, 2011). In our discussion groups, Filipinos admitted there was big pressure from the Philippines to send money home:

*"We are a big family in the Philippines so [we] really need to help those people [with] their fees, especially school fees" (Macaulay, migrant dairy farm employee)*

*"We find it's hard for family back home, they want money" (Migrant dairy farm employee)*

*"I am helping my mum build her house, me with several brothers. When I can't afford it, they fill in for me, when we are in the position that we can, we do" (Martin's wife)*

Filipinos who send such a big proportion of their incomes back to the Philippines are employees who Irene tries not to employ:

*Some of the Filipinos because they send so much money home, we have got the thinking, we try to do all to all these extra things for their staff to keep them happy, sometimes this more important than the actual money they receive. But a lot of employers do not think that way, and employees, because they are sending so much money home they don't care about time off or all the things we buy and do for them, they just want the money in the bank. That is the kind of staff we try to stay away from.*

But herein lies the conflict for Filipino workers. They all aspire to be successful in the New Zealand dairy industry and working their way up to contract milking, sharemilking, or eventual farm ownership. But by sending this income back to the Philippines, it will make it difficult to save money to enable them to enter these positions.

It is clear from our field work that New Zealand is now home for some migrant dairy farm employee participants. They are working to gain the desired qualifications and experience to qualify for PR. But not all New Zealanders recognise that for Filipinos, New Zealand is home. Martin was told by his farm advisor that he should go home for a holiday, to which he responded:

*This is our home, we are here to stay. We are not New Zealanders, we are Filipinos but this is what we call home. I have no other place to call home, my wife and kids are here, our business is here, [our] cows are here*

Pierce's children now recognise New Zealand as home, "my kids no longer want to go home to the Philippines, except for a vacation". Overall, dairy farm employer participants felt that the community should see migrant dairy farm employees, "as part of the community", and be prepared to embrace the, "positives and not just the negatives" they bring to the community.

### 2.3.2 Quality education and health care in New Zealand

One of the positives for migrants in New Zealand is the level *and* quality of education and healthcare that they can access. Nelson finds his children's school has been fantastic, "*we don't expect much [more] from the school because [the] school and teachers are friendly*". Pierce explained that one rural school in Southland had a role of 60 students and 15 were Filipino. Martin and Pierce have had experiences with the maternity system in New Zealand and find it first rate. Pierce had no worries when his wife went into labour in New Zealand in comparison to his experiences in the Philippines:

*I really have to worry what hospital we are going to bring my wife, because of limited money [in the Philippines] . . . there is a subsidy because we have health insurance but it's not one hundred per cent. You can get one hundred per cent coverage if you go in a government hospital, but those hospitals are congested. You have to wait for your turn to get into the labour room and once you had your baby you don't have any room for bed. You have to bring your own folding bed to put in [the] corridor because the maternity ward is very full.*

Martin was unsure of whether his wife was actually in labour, "*she had contractions at 3 am, but we weren't sure because it wasn't like the movies*". Unfortunately, while Martin was in hospital with his newborn, he was still required back at the dairy farm:

*When she was in hospital, after giving birth we were having cell count problems at the shed. I would sleep at the hospital with my wife and then at 2am, I'd come back to Winton and get things set for the day and then back to the hospital.*

## 2.4 Immigration

"The difference between a migrant and someone here [in New Zealand] who is unemployed, is that a migrant comes and wants to work" (Dairy farm employer)

At each of our discussion groups, the research team had a list of questions they wanted to ask and discuss with participants. While these questions were answered, discussions would inevitably return to problems faced with Immigration New Zealand (Immigration). The following sections will present the main issues that dairy farmers and migrant dairy farm employees face in relation to Immigration.

### 2.4.1 Changing the rules

When migrants seek a work visa in the dairy industry, they must fit the criteria of the position that they seek. The positions in the dairy industry that migrants qualify for are clearly defined and based on the annual Federated Farmers survey of dairy farmers. A dairy assistant (salary \$36,000 to \$43,000) can come to New Zealand with no qualifications, and are responsible for: feeding cows, assisting with health and welfare of cows, getting cows in, and milking cows. An Assistant Herd Manager (\$38,000 to \$45,000) has to have an equivalent qualification of AgITO Level 2 and two years' experience in the position, and have the following capabilities, manage stock, fertiliser, and animal health, and operate farm machinery. A Herd Manager (\$48,000 plus) needs AgITO Level 4 or equivalent and three years dairy experience, and are responsible for: maintaining animal health and condition, managing breeding programmes, organising the farm operation, the sale, purchase or transportation of animals, record keeping, managing farm finances, and selecting, training, and hiring employees (www.immigration.govt.nz, 2011).

However, our dairy farm employer participants felt that these rules and criteria are changing to exclude the people they now really require, "[the] *people the industry needs are the ones that immigration is blocking out*". These are the people to milk the cows. The perception from participants was Immigration perceives dairying as an unskilled job and, "*anyone who milks cows is unskilled and any clown can do it*". Participants explained 'any clown' might refer to unemployed New Zealanders.

When, in reality, the message that participant dairy farmers think the message that should be conveyed is that *all* dairy farm jobs are skilled. New Zealander walking off the street would not be able to fill these positions:

*Somebody said to me that the contractor's wife does calves [in the spring] 'Oh you're just a calf rearer, that's the bottom of the pit'. That is actually the most important job on the farm. We need [to convey] this image that any job associated with the [dairy] farm is very important . . . any job on a farm is a very important job. It's a basic cog in the mechanism operating that farm.*

Martin provides an example of how the rules related to work visas have changed. He arrived in New Zealand in 2005 to work as a dairy assistant. He had no experience, but a Bachelor of Science (Animal Science) and at this time, "some people were coming in without degrees because there was a shortage and it was very easy . . . if I had to get in now, I wouldn't get in". New migrant dairy farm employees have tougher criteria to fulfil to qualify for a work visa and, "for someone new coming in, it's very tough now because you have to prove that you have got the skills and experience in the position you are applying for". As already discussed, some migrants have gone to Saudi Arabia in order to gain the necessary experience to qualify for a work visa.

Not all the dairy farm positions in Southland fit the criteria presented by Immigration. For example, a Herd Manager on a 300 dairy cow farm will not have the same responsibilities as a Herd Manager on a 1,000 dairy cow farm. Heath tried to explain this to Immigration when they wanted his Herd Manager to be paid the amount specified:

*This is what Federated Farmers said a herd manager should get. I said 'no you can't expect Herd Manager on a 300 cow farm to get the same as a Herd Manager on a 1000 cow farm'. They were adamant that this is what they got. I said 'this is a survey, it's not saying what people should get'.*

For Pierce, this is an indication that Immigration and policy makers have no understanding of what occurs on the farm, "in Southland there is no assistant manager [and] that simply shows that they don't know". For employers, the salary packages described by Immigration can be huge, as Irene explains:

*For those positions they also have to have a certain level of wages as well, assistant herd manager has got to get \$40,000 gross salary and then everything on top of that, then for a herd manager they have to have \$45,000 plus benefits. Now, our Filipino employee came to us the other day to apply for residency but he needs \$45,000 plus housing and everything on top of that, and that is a huge package, but that is a requirement that they have.*

Rhys is very concerned about any future changes that are made to Immigration Policy, as migrant dairy farm employees have become such a vital part of the dairy farm labour force:

*I'm concerned about when the taps are turned off. I don't know there is still the same amount [of migrants] coming in [now], four or five years ago there was a positive attitude towards migrants working in the dairy industry.*

#### 2.4.2 Employ New Zealanders before migrant dairy farm employees?

These taps may be turned off with further changes to the levels of unemployment in New Zealand. Farmer participants stated that before they are able to re-hire their migrant employees when their work visas expire, they must first prove to Immigration that there are no New Zealanders suitable or available to fill the position. Heath argues this rule is, "stupid because you have to find that you can't find a Kiwi when all this time you have got a migrant working for you, now you have to prove that someone outside is better than him?" Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) may present New Zealanders to dairy farm employers to fill vacancies, but our participants found these people less than desirable. Irene had one who, "phoned me and said 'oh I don't really want to go for the interview because if I get the job now, I lose my benefit". Rebekah was expected to employ someone who had been in court for the ninth time:

*It didn't matter to Immigration whether they [New Zealanders] had a criminal record and what sort of criminal record and it didn't matter at all. We had to interview several people through WINZ and one person had just gone through the court system for the ninth time for theft from their employer . . . we were expected to employ that person . . . when immigration stated to us that we should be employing the person that had just been through the court, I said 'so tell me do you interview staff?' she said*

*yes. I asked her 'if you interviewed this person would you employ them?' She said 'no, they don't have the skills to do our job'. [Well] they don't have the skills to do our job either.*

While this person may have deserved a second chance, Irene would not have wanted to employ this person on her property who may come into contact with her children, her employee's children, their assets (dairy cows), or the dairy shed. In order to qualify for a work visa (and renew their work visa), migrant dairy farm employees must have a clear criminal record in their country of origin. Irene finds this contradiction unfathomable, "to employ someone like that when I can employ someone who has no criminal record, that [shows me the] standards are quite different".

Despite these stories of undesirable New Zealanders presented by WINZ, Heath did have some success with a WINZ candidate:

*I employed someone from WINZ and WINZ were going to pay for the first six months, half his salary . . . He came and three weeks [later] the guy from WINZ rang to find out how he was going. I said 'no he's alright I have a lot of patience'. He was shocked he was still going [group laughter].*

But from these results it would be easy to infer that the quality of some available New Zealanders was poor. But is it just in comparison to migrant dairy farm employees that New Zealanders are poor, or is it that they are not suited to the dairy industry? With the benefit of hindsight, Rhys thinks as an 18 year old he would not be suited to the modern dairy shed:

*The migrants that we are getting are mature people and motivated . . . I'd end up breaking my hands if I was 17 [or] 18 [and working in the dairy shed] it gets easier as you get older. But it's a dangerous environment and there is a lot going on and moving parts.*

#### 2.4.3 Work Visas, PR and AgITO

In order to enhance their prospects of renewing their work visas or qualifying for PR, migrant dairy farm employees attend AgITO. In the Winton area, 53 per cent of AgITO attendees were migrants. Classes however are costly and may be difficult for migrants to understand. Irene offers to pay for her employees to attend AgITO, but only once they have presented their certificate to say they had passed:

*For our staff, they do the course and pay for it. As soon as they bring us the certificate to say they have done it, we refund the money to them because we think it's a benefit to your business that they do the training and have the skills, that is what you said, if they move on, we train them up and it becomes easier for those staff once they have that year or two experience they are more in that higher position class I think and it becomes easier to employ them, because they have got the experience.*

Pierce has completed AgITO Level 4 and would like to complete Level 5, but this will be difficult for him. Previously his employers had paid for him, but now they do not.

Deb is currently undertaking a Level 3 management and communication AgITO paper, and based on her experience thinks that, "anyone with a second language would be really struggling [as] there is a lot of in-depth questions that you are expected to answer and do homework on and my feeling is that migrants would find it near impossible". As an employer of migrants Heath shares the same opinion as Deb, "I think sending them off to AgITO is maybe a step too far [as] the farm owner has to slowly introduce them [to English and farm tasks]". Macaulay is currently attending AgITO and admitted that it was hard, "it needs a lot of explanation [and] you need to know a lot about your farm, so you can talk about it".

Pierce feels that he is progressing well towards the criteria to qualify for PR (or work visa renewal if PR is declined); "I work hard stepping up every year, so that I can become a manager and collect the minimum wage so I can be assured of [gaining PR]". In order to advance his career, Nelson moved to a new place of employment and had to apply to Immigration for a variation on his work visa. However, his experiences with his new employer, did not match those of his previous employer and he was not treated well. To try and solve the problems he faced with his new employer Nelson got Federated Farmers involved, but they could not find a solution, so he returned to his previous employer (other workers also left). With the benefit of hindsight,

Nelson now understands why people, "were asking, why are you moving there? . . . it's like people knows what [employer] do, but I didn't know why".

Pierce has friends who have moved to new farms, "every year [and] I pity them. They are here four years and they still haven't found any good employers. [I believe] more than 50 per cent of dairy farmers are good employers". Dairy farmers at our discussion group suggested this was more like 90 per cent of employers that were good but, "those with happy staff have people knocking on the door asking for work". The strong Filipino network in Southland prevents cases like Nelsons, but others must learn the hard way. Now Nelson advises people who are moving to new employers to thoroughly investigate what they are like as employers:

*I tell my friends, Filipinos or anyone, try to understand before you go to [new employer], try to understand how many people he employed before. Even if you can ask them to give you reference of former employees and ask if he a good man.*

But applying for a new work visa, PR, or a variation of work visa is very costly. Pierce needs to renew his work visa or apply for PR in 2013, but already worries about finding the funds to pay for it; "where are we going to get this money? We cannot save this much". Pierce expects it will cost \$5,000 for his family to apply. Dairy farm employer participants highlighted that when migrants did apply for work visas or PR, there was no guarantee they would be successful or, "get any of that money back" if their visa is declined. It is on this basis that some migrants feel that, "Immigration is just helping the government [to] collect funds".

For a dairy farm employer, the amount of paper work required to employ a migrant can be endless and, "that puts off most employers from employing migrants because they don't want to go through the process and the hassles". Irene found when she wanted to re-employ her migrant she had to fill in paper work explaining, "this guy has been with us for the last two years, these are his skills [and] this is what he has done for us, we would like to keep him working for us". Heath, as an employer, grew frustrated with the lengthy delays associated with processing his migrant's visa renewal and discussed his frustrations with Immigration:

*I got very upset with one immigration officer who say they need 45 days [to process visa]. I asked 'why you need 45 days? It will take 45 days if you want it to take 45 days, it could take 45 seconds if you wanted to'. The following day it was sorted.*

If dairy farm employers find the process of renewing work visas frustrating, imagine how frustrating it must be for migrant dairy farm employees! For a period of time, there was no face-to-face contact point for migrants if they wanted to speak to Immigration, they had to call Immigration or visit them in Dunedin, Wellington, or Christchurch. But Venture Southland has now established good links with Immigration and brings them to Invercargill every four months to interact with migrants. These links with Immigration took Venture Southland six years to achieve though. Dairy farm employer participants have found that it is in their best interests to be compliant with the rules or procedures Immigration have in place.

## 2.4.4 Working hours and conditions

At the end of the second migrant dairy farm employee discussion group, we asked participants if they felt that their hours of work were fair. The group response was, "no". This unfairness seemed to revolve around the hours of work per week in contracts, in comparison to hours worked per week; *"they put in the contract 50 hours per a week, but they don't follow it, especially in calving time"*. The common response for migrants was they were currently working 10 to 11 hours per day. Table 3 outlines the different arrangements for days off that our migrants had and farm size. After discussing this, the migrants in the discussion group asked *"is there a New Zealand law that [restricts working hours]?"* At which time, the feeling in the room rose, before quickly becoming deflated when the researchers responded "no".

**Table 3 Examples of roster arrangements and dairy cow/employee ratio**

<b>Time Off</b>	<b>Dairy Cow, Employee ratio</b>
<b>8 days on, 2 off</b>	1,500 cows, five employees
<b>11 days on, 3 days off</b>	800 cows, five employees
<b>12 days on, 2 off</b>	500 cows, two employees
<b>6 days on and 1 day off (Calving only)</b>	850 cows, four employees

Our migrant participants felt that these working hours were unfair and had questioned employers about overtime and changing the working hours. Macaulay asked his employer about overtime, *"When I first came here, I asked him 'do you have overtime payment?' and he said no"*. Nelson found, *"they [dairy farm employers] become ugly if you talk about overtime payments"*. In order to finish earlier at night, Nelson wanted to start milking earlier in the afternoon, but found:

*You can bring the cows earlier so you aren't milking at seven [o'clock at night], but the farmer doesn't like that. He wants you to bring them [dairy cows] at three and milk until seven. When you ask, why are you milking after seven, they [dairy farm employer] become angry.*

Our migrant dairy farm employee participants knew how working conditions in the Australian dairy industry differed from New Zealand *"it's not like Australia, where they get paid on an hourly rate"*. If dairy farm employees are not treated well, in our opinion, they may leave the dairy industry and where would the dairy industry be then?

## 3.0 Conclusion

This study sought to explore and understand the implications of a migrant dairy farm employee labour force for the New Zealand dairy industry and rural communities. In order to gather this information, three discussion groups were held with dairy farm employers and migrant dairy farm employees, and an informal discussion group was held with community advocates, in April 2012.

### 3.1 Research questions answered

An understanding of how migrants' learned of the opportunities in the New Zealand dairy industry was gained, as well as, how they adapted to their new homes and occupation, the training they received from their employers, and the different misunderstandings faced by migrants' and their employers. While dairy farmers were very welcoming of their migrants' on farm, the wider Southland community has yet to accept these newcomers as part of the community. The greatest problem faced by dairy farmers and migrant dairy farm employees was related to the practices and policies introduced by Immigration New Zealand. Overall, considerable further research is required.

## 3.2 Research questions unanswered

Our discussion groups were framed around the six research questions (p.3) developed by the research team at the start of the project. As is clear from our results, however, this research has created more questions than answers. We do not have an indication of the implication of the changing demographics in the dairy industry and how this may influence rural communities and dairy farms (Research Question 1 and 2). We may not get a true indication of the number of migrant dairy farm employees in the industry until the next Census is completed. But it is clear more research needs to be completed to understand the influence of migrant dairy farm employees on schools and communities in rural communities influenced by the dairy industry.

The third research question related to understanding the influence of migrant dairy farm employees on farm systems and management of dairy farms. In the discussion groups it was suggested by employers that training requirements were more stringent for migrant dairy farm employees five years ago. There are more migrants available to train new migrants. With greater numbers of migrants in Southland now there is not the same requirement. This is not how our migrant dairy farm employee participants felt. They did not feel they were provided with adequate training to use farm equipment, particularly tractors, and without these skills migrants are unable to leave employment to advance their careers. Is this a deliberate limitation to enable employers to keep their migrant dairy farm employees?

Research Question four was to explore the health, welfare and support requirements of migrant dairy farm employees. Participants commended the high levels of health care in New Zealand, but migrants may miss out on other welfare and support services because they are unable to speak or understand English. All of our participant employers wanted their employees to be able to speak English, as a matter of farm safety. English Language Lessons are not funded by the Government until migrants gain PR but to gain PR migrants need to indicate that they can speak and understand English! Clearly this situation needs to be reviewed or research undertaken to understand whether this is as important to migrant dairy farm employees as it is to their employers. The local community could be engaged to help with migrant dairy farm employees learning English, if the demand is there.

The fifth research question sought to understand the training and support needs of senior dairy farm employees for managing migrant dairy farm employees. Again, we have no understanding of whether this is an issue at all or whether these employees are sent to management courses. What is clear is that the more migrant dairy farm employees who progress through the dairy industry, the greater the understanding of managing migrant dairy farm employees will need to be. Should an understanding of how to treat migrant dairy farm employees be a prerequisite for senior management? How many migrant dairy farm employees want to progress in the dairy industry? What challenges may these migrant dairy farm employees face from colleagues and employers in the dairy industry and from external influences such as the requirement to send money back to the Philippines? Further in-depth research is required to understand these issues.

The final research question sought to develop an understanding of the migrants' experience of the dairy industry. Their experiences are what this report has been framed around. But there are still many unknowns that warrant further research. The policies and practices of Immigration New Zealand were a great frustration for participants, but do Immigration New Zealand and policy makers have an understanding of what actually occurs on farm? If they understood, would this change any of their policy decisions? What interest groups are driving policy changes related to Immigration and the Dairy Industry, and why? Do these dairy farmers create the problems themselves in relation to Immigration? We need to undertake an in-depth look at the operation of Immigration New Zealand in relation to the dairy industry and how their processes work.

The wider community recognises that Filipino migrant dairy farm employees send a proportion of their income back to the Philippines, but does the wider community understand the cultural importance to Filipinos? Filipinos make up a large proportion of migrant dairy farm employees in Southland and throughout New Zealand, and ideally we should develop an understanding of why the first Filipino dairy farm employees came to New Zealand? Was it an accident or purposeful? Did the Philippines' government play a part? What is it like in the Philippines for extended families with husbands, sons or fathers working in the New Zealand dairy industry? What are the recruitment processes for workers to the New Zealand dairy industry like in the Philippines? By answering these questions, the public could be educated to gain a greater understanding of this vital component of the dairy industry.

Our research has established many more questions than answers. Of our six research questions, we have only adequately answered two of these questions. A limitation to answering these six questions was the research approach and time frame. The researchers had a very short time period which limited the research and what we could achieve, for example, the research team was in Southland for two full days and held three discussion groups on these days. A different approach, such as semi-structured interviewing of dairy farmers and migrant dairy farm employees may have drawn out a different set of data and enabled the research team to explore each of the research questions more thoroughly. However, this exploratory study has identified many avenues of future research that could and should be undertaken.

## Appendix I

### Lincoln University Research – Migration Research Strategy

To help encourage dairy farm employers and migrant dairy farm employees to attend our Winton discussion groups, a press release was issued from Lincoln University and circulated to local Southland Media (Appendix I). This press release generated three requests for interviews with local journalists which were all granted, resulting in Appendices I, II, III, IV and V. The Southland Times seemed more interested in controversy rather than accurate reporting of what we were in Southland to discover. Appendices IV and V are more accurate.

### Initial Press Release

“Four Lincoln University researchers are embarking on a study to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with a migrant dairy farm labour force for the New Zealand dairy industry and rural communities.

Over the last ten years, the prosperity of the dairy industry has encouraged many South Island farmers to convert to intensive dairy farming. This in turn has created a high demand for dairy farm employees. New Zealanders have not been attracted to the dairy industry, with well publicised problems related to long working hours, difficult working conditions and rates of pay. There are some issues with New Zealand born workers in the dairy industry, related to retention and recruitment, and other social problems such as drugs and alcohol abuse. In the face of this, dairy farmers have turned to migrants to alleviate demand for labour in the New Zealand dairy industry. Migrant dairy farm employees have become an increasingly vital, yet under researched element of the New Zealand dairy labour force.

The research team, led by Dr Rupert Tipples, will delve further into the influence of migrant dairy farm employees on farm systems and management, training requirements of employees in relation to migrants and the experiences of dairy farmers with migrant dairy farm employees. They also seek to understand the migrant dairy farm employees’ perspectives of the New Zealand dairy industry, their migration experiences and support services available in rural communities.

The current study will focus on the Southland region and provide direction for future studies on migrant dairy farm employees in New Zealand.”



The research team: (L to R) Sue Trafford, Dr Rupert Tipples, Jill Greenhalgh and Philippa Rawlinson

## Appendix II

SOUTHLAND TIMES — 27 APR 2012 Edition 1, Page 3

Immigrants top pick for farm work

By: Shawn McAvinue

Southland dairy farmers are finding immigrants more desirable staff than "dysfunctional" New Zealanders, a Lincoln University academic says.

University researcher Rupert Tipples said a lot of problems dairy farmers were seeing with Kiwis was that they might have a criminal record, social issues and did not want to work.

"In contrast, the migrants come in to work, make money, pay money back to their relatives, and they are highly motivated," Dr Tipples said.

This month he invited 700 Southland dairy farmers to Winton to talk about immigrants working on dairy farms.

A Dairy Insight study he worked on in 2004 highlighted the need for immigrants in the New Zealand dairy industry.

Dairy farmers preferred employing immigrants for the entry-level jobs once deemed suitable for unemployed New Zealanders, he said.

"The unemployed New Zealanders, they have less skills and qualifications, and if you throw in something like 'have you got a clean criminal record?' All the migrants need to have that to get in the country."

A Canterbury farmer once told Dr Tipples because of New Zealanders' social baggage, he employed only Filipinos.

"Because you don't have to do all the social work, [that] you have to do with the Kiwis. You're their financial adviser, you're their councillor and social worker, and a farmer at the same time.

"The guy said 'I want to be a farmer, I don't want to be doing all these social worker things, that's not my stuff,' yet that's what comes when you have a dysfunctional Kiwi worker," Dr Tipples said.

Most of the unemployed lived in the North Island, were young Maori and Pacific Islanders, and would not head south for work, Dr Tipples said.

"The major group of unemployment, at the highest rate these days is Maori and Pasifika youth. They probably come out of school with minimal qualifications, they probably live north of Hamilton, and the jobs are down here in Canterbury and Southland."

Getting staff for the Maori tribal land developed into dairy farms would be challenging, Dr Tipples said.

"What about all their dairy developments that are now beginning to take place? Are they going to employ young Maori to be the workers on those? Or are they going to get caught with the exact same problem? They won't get young Maori and Pasifika youth working on their farms, and they'll have to employ migrants to milk their cows."

Federated Farmers Southland dairy chairman Russell MacPherson said he attended the Winton meeting. The achievements by immigrants in the dairy industry should make unemployed New Zealanders ashamed, he said.

"Unemployed people in New Zealand should take a look at themselves. There are a lot of good jobs on dairy farms."

Former Southland Filipino Community Club president Jovial Intervencion said about 2000 Filipinos were working in the dairy industry in Southland.

## Appendix IV

Fairfax Digital Edition  
 fairfaxmedia.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx  
 Fairfax Media DIGITAL EDITION  
 The Invercargill Eye Calendar 26 Apr 2012 Table of Contents 6 - 7 Front Page

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# Dairy migrants inquiry by team from Lincoln

By MARY WITSEY

A group of Lincoln University researchers has been in Southland looking into migrant labour issues in the dairy industry. Led by researcher Dr Rupert Tipples, the team aims to explore the implications of a migrant dairy farm labour force for New Zealand dairy farms and for the rural communities.

"While the dairy industry knows a lot about cows, it appears to know less about the people who support it and that needs to improve if the industry is to go forward," Dr Tipples said.

"We want to be able to highlight some of the real issues people are facing and produce tools which will help both the industry and its rural communities."

The researchers have held workshops in Southland, interviewing migrant workers from the Philippines, Switzerland, Chile and India, along with Southland dairy farmers and local councils and support agencies. An interim report was scheduled for release in May.

He said the industry was relying more and more on a migrant workforce.

"At the end of the day, we're interested in helping the industry in terms of cows getting milked and industry productivity, but we also want to help migrants adjust to communities and fit in well.

"If dairy farmers want loyalty and better productivity, it needs to be a good experience. If people are happy, they'll go the extra mile." The Lincoln University team's research follows claims in November by a group of Filipino and New Zealand dairy farm workers, who claimed exploitation by some Southland farm bosses.



Migrant review: Lincoln University senior lecturer in employment relations Dr Rupert Tipples in Southland talking to migrants about their experiences in the dairy industry in this province.  
 Photo: MARY WITSEY

*NZ International Piano Festival*  
 7.30pm Sunday 29th April



Widely acclaimed pianists *Natasha Vlassenko* and *Oleg Stepanov* will offer an exciting mixture of solos and duets for their New Zealand Inter...



## Appendix V

Rural News, 1<sup>st</sup> May, pg.12

### Dairy sector needs to bone-up on migrant workers

» MARY WITSEY

WHILE THE dairy industry knows a lot about cows, it appears to know a lot less about the people who work in it, say Lincoln University researchers who investigated migrant labour issues in the sector.

The researchers hope to release an interim report next month on their findings on the implications of a migrant dairy farm labour force for New Zealand farms and rural communities.

Researcher and Lincoln University senior lecturer in employment relations Dr Rupert Tipples says understanding migrant labour issues is crucial if the dairy sector wants to progress.

"We want to be able to highlight some of the real issues people are facing and produce tools which will help both the industry and its migrant staff."

Research has been done this month in Canterbury and Southland on issues such as training requirements, wages and support services for migrant workers, he says.

"We want to determine the impacts of migrants on farm systems and their management, look at the health, welfare and support needs of migrants and discover whether the migrant experience can be improved."

He suggests the industry is relying more and more on a migrant workforce as staff recruitment and retention become problematic.

"Staff turnover is far more accentuated in the dairy industry than in the rest of the country, so it's not doing well. It's not an attractive industry compared to others: the hours are long, accident rates are high and people are often required to live on-farm in an isolated situation."

In response to that the number of migrant workers is now quite significant, he points out.

"At the end of the day we're interested in helping the industry in respect of cows getting milked and industry productivity, but we also want to help migrants adjust to communities and fit in well. It can be a win-win situation for farmers, for their cows and for farm workers."

Migrant interviews in the south are confidential but Tipples says there are some common issues. "Language is a major one; kiwis speak too fast and they use kiwi slang which the migrants struggle with."

English language classes are therefore important, though while farmers often enrol their staff, they don't follow through and give them the time off to attend, he suggests.

"Accommodation on arrival can also be an issue, with quality and cleanliness often seriously lacking."

And while migrants have brought back life to many southern schools, the social side for migrant children in rural areas is often a concern.

"If dairy farmers want loyalty and better productivity, it needs to be a good experience for these people. If people are happy they'll go the extra mile."

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