

# Pathway for migrant farm workers

By Allan Crome

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) have announced a new one-off residency visa, which allows thousands of farm workers to apply for residence, a vital step in securing their long-term future in NZ.

The new 2021 residency visa helps up to 165,000 migrants currently in NZ, many of whom may not have otherwise qualified for residence.

"This new residence visa is great news, not only for farm workers but also farm owners. Keeping our current skilled staff is vital. Prior to this rule change we had seen highly skilled migrant staff leaving New Zealand to Australia and Canada where visa rules were more welcoming. Our farm workers can now plan for a future in New Zealand with their families," Waikato dairy farmer and New Zealand Shores Immigration business development manager Grant Coombes says.

The significance of this visa cannot be understated, this provides a golden opportunity for many migrants to secure their future in NZ.

The vast majority of migrant workers on dairy farms can apply, along with many other roles in the primary sector.

The eligibility criteria to be met includes being in NZ on September 29, 2021 and holding (or have applied for and subsequently granted) an eligible work visa.

Applicants must also meet one of the following criteria:

- have lived in New Zealand for three or more years, or
- earn at or above \$27 per hour, or
- work in a role on a scarce list (which includes farm worker roles).

Applications for the 2021 Resident Visa will be rolled out in two phases: from December 1, 2021 and from March 1, 2022. Partners and dependent children (including those currently outside NZ) can be included. There are also streamlined criteria for police certificates and medicals. Dairy workers yet to enter NZ may still also be eligible if granted a



Migrant workers may now qualify for residency under a new residence visa that will allow them to secure a long-term future in New Zealand. New Zealand Shores Immigration business development manager Grant Coombes with migrant workers Leslie Gulayan, Josiah Sosmena and Evan Divinagracia, who all work on a dairy farm at Horotiu just north of Hamilton.

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**Grant Coombes**

class exception visa and enter NZ over the coming months.

Applications must be submitted by July 31, 2022, so we suggest migrants start document preparation early, as this can take months and is vital to get right.

It will be a very busy time for INZ receiving applications for the 2021 residence visas, combined with the mandatory requirement for employers to become INZ-accredited, signalled for mid next year.

"New Zealand Shores has been working with farmers for over 12 years; this is by far the biggest change in immigration history to date and we suggest getting your visa application submitted as soon as practically possible to avoid lengthy processing delays," he says.

## Who am I?

Allan Crome is a licensed immigration adviser and director of New Zealand Shores.