



INSPIRE · NETWORK · GROW

Inspire, Network, Grow:
Gender Representation
in the Meat Sector 2020

MEAT BUSINESS WOMEN

FOREWORD

“

I have no family connection to the meat and livestock sector, and I fell into the meat industry by accident after graduating from university and becoming a marketing manager for a meat wholesaler. I quickly realised that I loved working in the sector, and as my career progressed and my roles became more senior, I found that I was often one of only a few females in a room. While I felt that I had found my perfect career, it became apparent that the perceived image of the industry is not one that always appeals to new talent and that the industry lacks networking opportunities for like-minded, ambitious people.

Passionate about convincing women that the meat sector could offer them a rewarding career, in 2015 I launched Meat Business Women, a global professional group for females working in the industry. With the ultimate goal of assuring the sustainability of our sector by attracting and retaining the best possible talent, the group set out with three clear objectives: to improve the image of the industry to women; to nurture new entrants through education and mentoring; and to improve networking.

Five years later, the organisation has more than 5,500 members in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the USA and

is recognised by the United Nations as a contributor to their Sustainable Development Goals.

Meat Business Women is proud to share our first international report on gender representation in the meat industry. Surprisingly (and perhaps tellingly), we believe this is the first report ever produced on this subject within this sector.

The meat sector plays a critical role in providing high-quality, sustainable food to the communities and customers we serve. The sector operates on tight margins and needs to embrace the best possible talent from within each of those areas to survive in an increasingly



Laura Ryan, Founder and Chair of Meat Business Women

challenging global market. It is well known that diverse organisations outperform their less diverse competitors in the key measures of profitability, innovation and employee engagement.

Our research findings suggest that when it comes to inclusion the meat sector lags behind many other sectors. There are encouraging examples within the industry of organisations leading the way on

gender representation, but we have work to do to create a truly inclusive workforce and leadership culture. This report sets out practical solutions for increasing the number of women joining the sector and reaching senior roles, and for creating a more inclusive environment on a sustained basis.

Of course, gender is only one aspect of inclusion; our research echoed distinct lack of ethnic

diversity within our sector. People of colour and indigenous people are under-represented at middle and senior levels. We would urge the sector to do more work in this area to understand the specific barriers and enablers to creating a more ethnically diverse workforce.

We call on industry leaders to review and action our findings in order to attract and retain the best possible talent to ensure the sustainability of our sector.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report establishes an international view on gender inclusion in the meat industry. It draws on survey data from over 60 organisations across five countries, in-depth interviews with senior HR and operational leaders, and focus groups of women and men working in the sector and potential employees not yet in the sector.

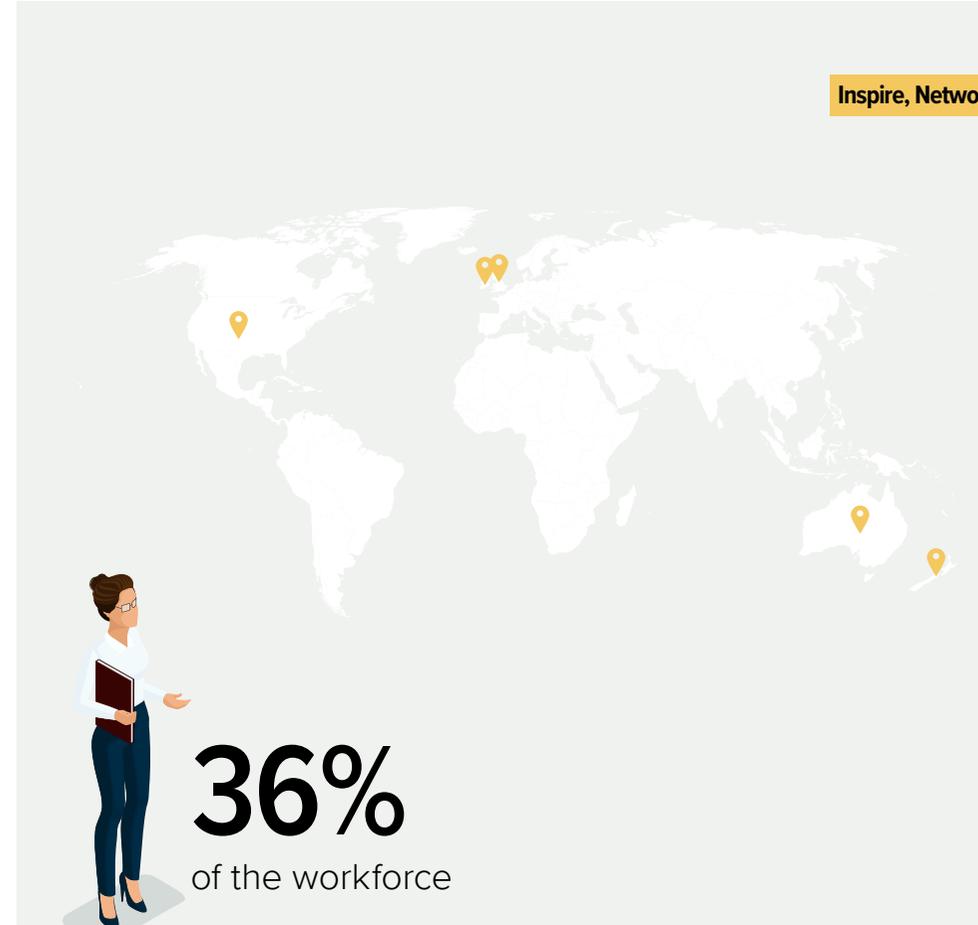
Our research has uncovered that women make up 36% of the workforce in the businesses that participated in the study.

Our research shows that women are heavily represented in the most junior roles in the sector and under-represented at every level above junior level.

It tells us that women hold just 14% of board-level director roles and 5% of the chief executive roles.

The meat sector is lagging behind other sectors in creating an industry and workplaces that attract and promote female talent. In doing so, it is failing to reap the rewards that come from creating a diverse workforce.

This report identifies five key themes and the practical actions that the sector as a whole can take, what individual businesses can do and the role Meat Business Women plays to proactively shift the dial on gender representation.



36%
of the workforce

Women are heavily represented in junior roles and under-represented at every level above junior level.

14%
Board-level director roles

5%
Chief executive roles

Meat Business Women supports the global industry, businesses and individual women working across the meat industry, by offering:

Specific gender-inclusion toolkits and resources.

Monthly international-member virtual webinars with industry and personal development experts.

Access to a trial mentoring portal with mentoring best-practice guidance and resources.

Conferences and networking events in each territory, working closely with our trusted territory partners.

A proactive meaningful pillar of Corporate Social Responsibility, which can be used in gender-pay reporting.

Positive role models via the annual One to Watch Prize.

Content to share at careers fairs and proof of positive action.

Opportunities for businesses to become involved in new Meat Business Women initiatives, including the creation of the Meat Business Women accreditation.

See what the industry says about us [here](#).

KEY THEMES



KEY THEME 1: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECTOR ... PERCEPTION NEED NOT BE REALITY

“ I have a perception that it is a male-dominated sector and that I’d feel uncomfortable working in it.”

There is an embedded perception that jobs in the meat sector are more physically demanding than jobs in other sectors, alongside negative preconceptions about the working environment. Despite the existence of a wide variety of jobs in a range of environments, many people outside the

sector are only aware of a narrow selection of roles, usually limited to farming and butchery. **The meat industry is reticent to tell its story and make people aware of the breadth of roles and opportunities that exist. The story needs to be crafted, curated and communicated continuously.**

KEY THEME 2: MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA ... IT MUST BE NOW

“ Lack of focus on inclusion in the meat sector is the secret everyone knows about.”

Inclusion is still seen as an optional ‘nice to have’, rather than a key part of business strategy for many meat businesses. Where there is a drive for change, it often comes from outside the sector in the form of customer pressure or following the appointment of a senior

leader from a more inclusive industry. **Some buyers are demanding a commitment to Diversity and Inclusion from their suppliers, resulting in leaders in that field professionalising their approaches, policies and processes in order to attract and retain female talent.**

KEY THEME 3: TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE

“ There are pockets where women do well – Quality, R&D, Finance and HR; outside of these areas it’s much harder to get senior roles.”

Women are under-represented in the meat sector, making up only 36% of the workforce. They are heavily represented in the most junior roles and under-represented at every level above this, with few women in the most senior leadership roles. There are ‘broken rungs’ in the career ladder, which

contribute to a lack of women at the most senior levels. **Men are more likely to progress than women at key career steps, such as between unskilled and skilled/first-line manager roles, and between mid-level leadership roles and the most senior leadership roles.**

KEY THEMES

KEY THEME 4: STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND CREATING VISIBLE ROLE MODELS ... ASPIRE AND INSPIRE

“There are some great women at the top of the industry – but they are few and far between.”

Networks play a vital role in career advancement for women. They provide access to jobs, development opportunities, feedback and market insight. Women who are matched with a mentor through a formal programme are 50% more likely to be promoted than those who find a mentor informally. **The meat sector has fewer senior women than other sectors, meaning there**

are less opportunities for women with leadership roles to network together. The absence of senior, female role models in the sector can send the message that senior roles are not available or suited to women. We need to increase the number of senior female role models and create platforms for women in the industry to engage meaningfully with each other.

KEY THEME 5: THE WAY WE WORK DOESN'T WORK ... GENDER PROOFING WORKING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS

“The work patterns aren't conducive to caring responsibilities, so we end up with a gap in the pipeline which doesn't get refilled.”

Workplace flexibility is an essential enabler for creating an inclusive workplace. Women are still more likely than men to care for children or elderly parents and therefore more likely to look for workplace flexibility when

considering employment opportunities. **To encourage greater flexibility, the meat sector needs to challenge existing assumptions about job design and location and capitalise on the learnings from COVID-19.**



“When I returned from maternity leave ... I was the first person [of any seniority] in the business who'd been offered part-time ... That does an awful lot for your own morale in terms of why you stay.”

THE CASE FOR GENDER INCLUSION

The business case for creating gender-inclusive workplaces is clear and unequivocal. Businesses with diverse workforces are more profitable¹ and have better share prices². Companies which have executive committees with female membership of more than 33% have a net profit margin over ten times greater than those companies with no women at this level.³



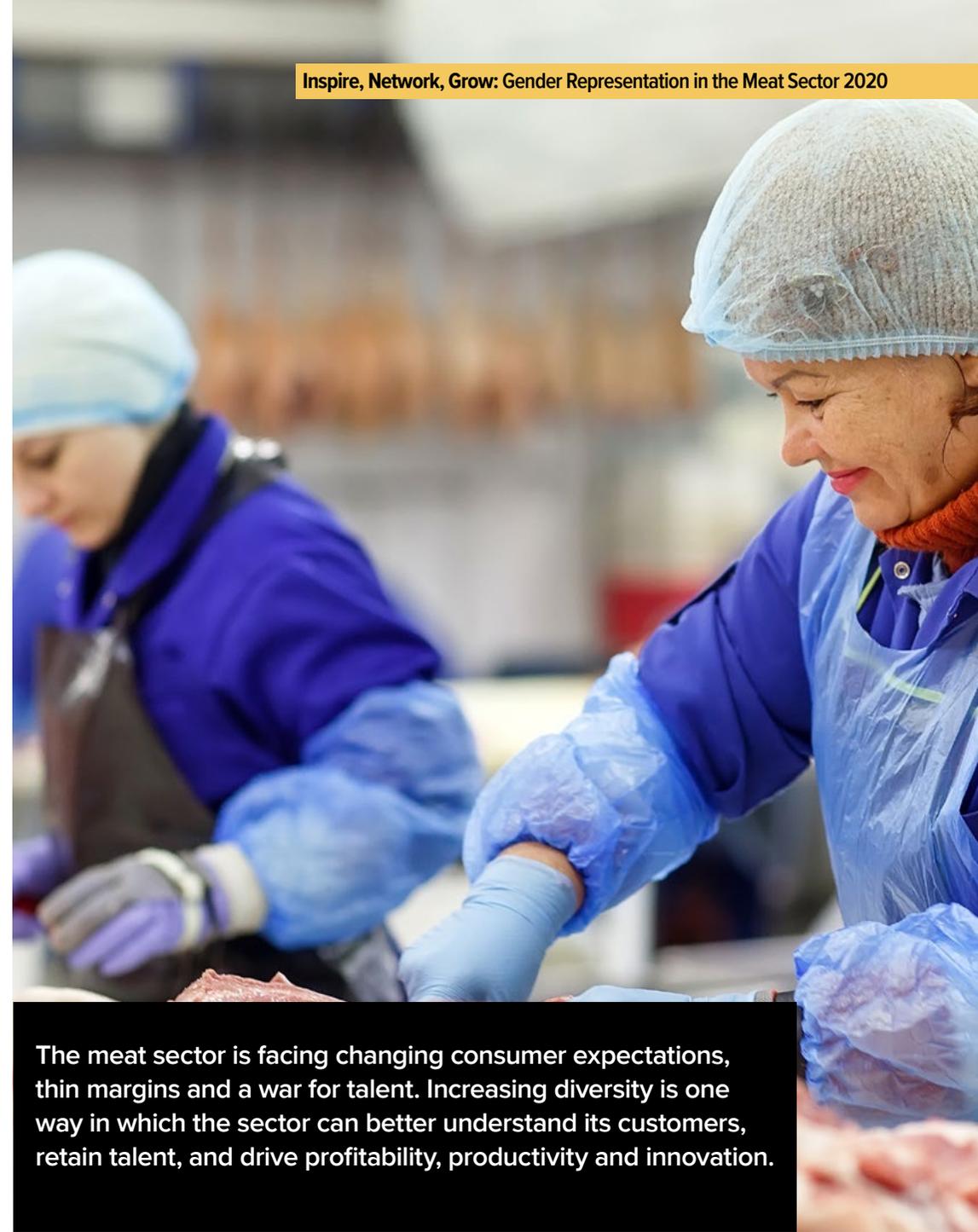
Businesses with diverse workforces more accurately represent their customer and employee base, meaning they have better access to vital insights and perspectives.⁴



They have more diversity of thought, which drives innovation and better risk management.⁵



They have access to a wider range of leadership styles, which drives engagement and productivity.⁶



The meat sector is facing changing consumer expectations, thin margins and a war for talent. Increasing diversity is one way in which the sector can better understand its customers, retain talent, and drive profitability, productivity and innovation.

KEY THEMES

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Meat Business Women set out to uncover the barriers and enablers to women joining and progressing in the meat industry, and to find the ‘bright spots’ – the organisations where inclusive practices are better than the meat industry average – and share their activity and approaches to the challenges of gender inclusivity.

Our research included:



A survey of 60 companies (with a combined total of over 50,000 employees) in the UK, Ireland, the USA, Australia and New Zealand.



Focus groups with 30 women and men working in the meat sector in the UK, the USA and Australia.



Interviews with senior HR and operations leaders in the UK, the USA and Australia.



Focus groups with 65 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UK (33% studying agriculture, engineering or food-related subjects).

KEY THEME 1: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECTOR ...

PERCEPTION NEED NOT BE REALITY

There is an embedded perception that work in the meat sector is more physically demanding than other sectors. There are also strong, negative preconceptions about the working environment. Despite the existence of a wide variety of jobs in a range of environments, many people outside the sector are only aware of a narrow selection of roles, usually limited to farming and butchery. The meat sector is reticent to tell its story and make people aware of the breadth of roles and opportunities that exist.



Students in the undergraduate/postgraduate focus groups were unaware of the wide range of possible career opportunities in the sector. Of the students we spoke to, 55% reported no or little knowledge of the sector when making school exam choices, resulting in fewer students moving into the sector via relevant studies at university.

Where students were aware of the sector, they had already formed a view that it is a tougher sector for women to thrive in, with:

37%

believing they would face barriers to success because of their gender; and

80%

being unable to see role models in the sector who would encourage them to join.

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

People form their perception about a sector through their day-to-day interactions with it. Their perceptions are based on what they see and hear. Those organisations which are doing better than average at recruiting and retaining women have well-considered approaches, including:

- ✓ engaging with their local community via community events, school talks and careers services;
- ✓ emphasising the breadth of range in terms of roles available, and breaking down preconceptions about what the work involves;
- ✓ counteracting the negative image of the sector by telling compelling stories that showcase the positives of contribution to community and society;
- ✓ making their female talent at all levels visible, so people can imagine themselves working in the sector;
- ✓ ensuring recruitment practices (e.g. gender-neutral advert wording and visuals, interview-panel composition), website content and social media presence are equally attractive to women;
- ✓ using female role models on literature and advertising; and
- ✓ creating internship and placement opportunities to showcase the sector.

“When I say I work in an abattoir, people don't understand. They assume it's horrific, it's not a job for the girls, it's a job for the boys.”

KEY THEME 2: MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA ... IT HAS TO BE NOW

Inclusion is still seen as an optional ‘nice to have’, rather than a key part of business strategy in many meat businesses. Where there is a drive for change, it often comes from outside the sector in the form of customer pressure or the appointment of a senior leader from a more inclusive sector.

Increasingly, large organisational buyers such as Tesco (UK), Costco (Australia) and McDonalds (USA) are demanding that their suppliers demonstrate commitment to Diversity and Inclusion. This is driving increased awareness of inclusive practices across some areas of the sector. The focus of buyers’ current requirements is broad (i.e. broad Corporate Social Responsibility measures) and focused on compliance (i.e. demonstrating that policies are in place). However, increasingly buyers’ focus is becoming more specific and outcome-focused.

Senior teams are still largely made up of white men; and where there are women, they may have had to make family sacrifices or adopt a masculine leadership style to succeed. Research participants noted that few senior leaders are willing, or have the confidence, to call out behaviours and practices that fail to facilitate inclusivity.

Some research participants likened the meat industry to an ‘old boys’ club’. They observed women’s careers being held back, and women leaving the industry because of the workplace culture.

There are businesses in the sector with well-advanced Diversity and Inclusion strategies, innovative approaches, and good outcomes, which can act as a beacon and benchmark for others (see the ‘Case studies’ section of this report).



“When it comes to inclusion there’s an action and strategy gap. Businesses in the sector want to do the right thing – but they don’t know what to do.”

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

Those organisations which are doing better than average at recruiting and retaining women have well-considered approaches for:

- ✓ creating ownership and accountability, for example making someone in the senior leadership team responsible for leading on Diversity and Inclusion, and making it a shared priority for the whole team, not just HR;
- ✓ understanding what their Diversity and Inclusion priorities are, and what is most relevant to their business;
- ✓ creating ways to hear the experiences of under-represented groups in the workplace, for example through listening sessions, focus groups, reverse mentoring or survey data;
- ✓ getting the data that tells them how they are currently performing, for example collecting workforce gender, ethnicity and age data, gender and ethnicity pay-gap data, and recruitment and retention data;
- ✓ benchmarking other businesses both within and outside the sector to test ideas and learn what works;
- ✓ being clear on what an inclusive culture and inclusive leadership would look like in their business; and
- ✓ creating a strategy and action plan, for example setting targets and measuring and reporting on progress.

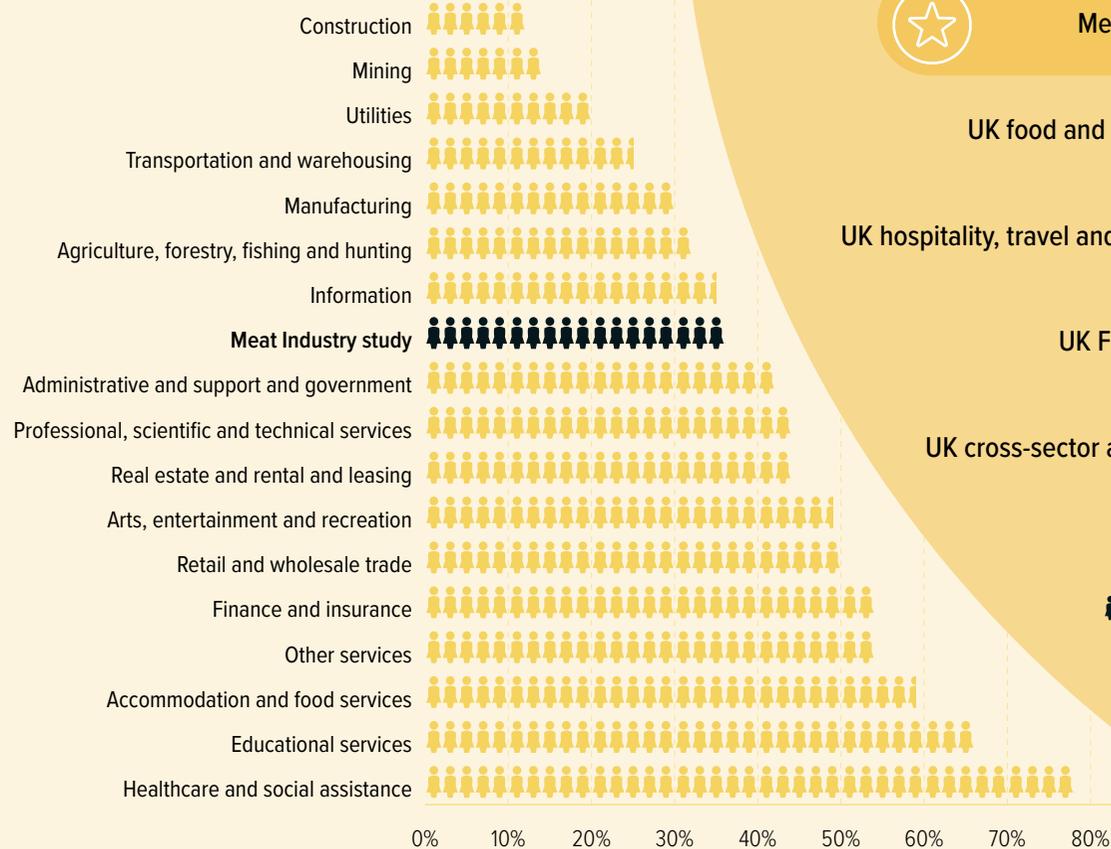
KEY THEME 3: TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE

The meat sector has two underlying issues. It employs a lower percentage of women than other sectors, meaning women are under-represented in the sector. Those women who are in the sector face broken rungs in the career ladder that prevent them moving to senior roles. In summary, there are not enough women in the talent pipeline, and not enough of them are moving up the talent pipeline into senior roles.

“There’s a dearth of women in senior operational roles. It’s hard to balance childcare with an operational leadership role – so women move out and go into functional areas where it’s easier to manage.”

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN THE SECTOR

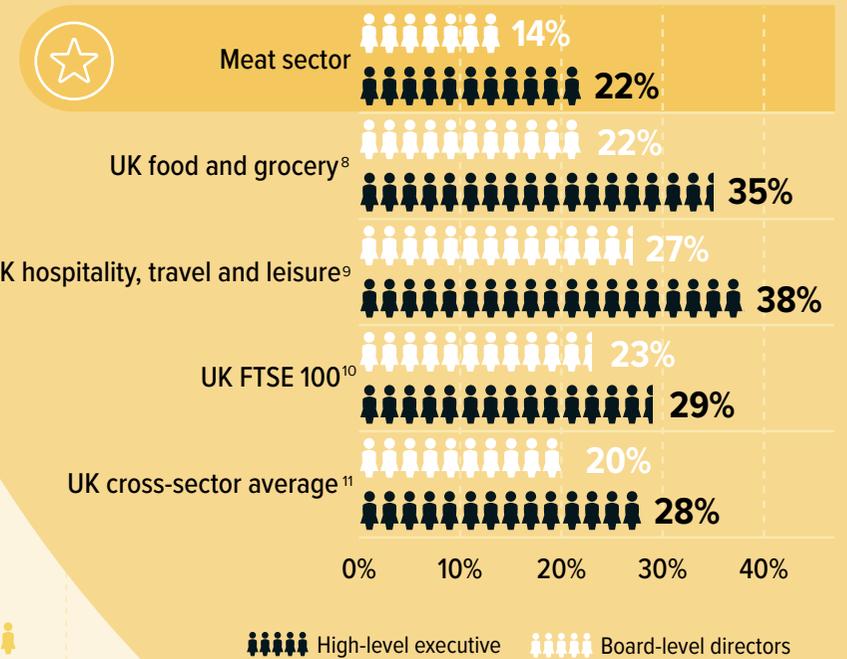
Our research has uncovered that women make up 36% of the workforce in the businesses that participated in the study. In comparison to other sectors, the meat sectors employs a lower percentage of women.



(Data based on weighted average of Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the UK and the USA.)⁷

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

In comparison to other sectors, the meat sector has fewer women at senior level. Women hold 22% of high-level executive roles and just 14% of board-level director roles.



(There is no global data on women’s representation at senior levels in sectors, so we have used UK data to provide this sector comparison.)

KEY THEME 3: TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE

The broken rungs in the career ladder

If women in the meat sector were advancing their careers at the same rate as men, we would see a similar proportion of women at each stage in the career ladder. Instead, what we see in the sector is that women are heavily-represented in the most junior roles and under-represented at every level above this, with very few women at the most senior leadership levels.

There are ‘broken rungs’ in the career ladder (i.e. key career steps where men are more likely to progress than women). The broken rungs occur between unskilled and skilled/first-line manager roles, and between mid-level leadership roles and the most senior leadership roles.

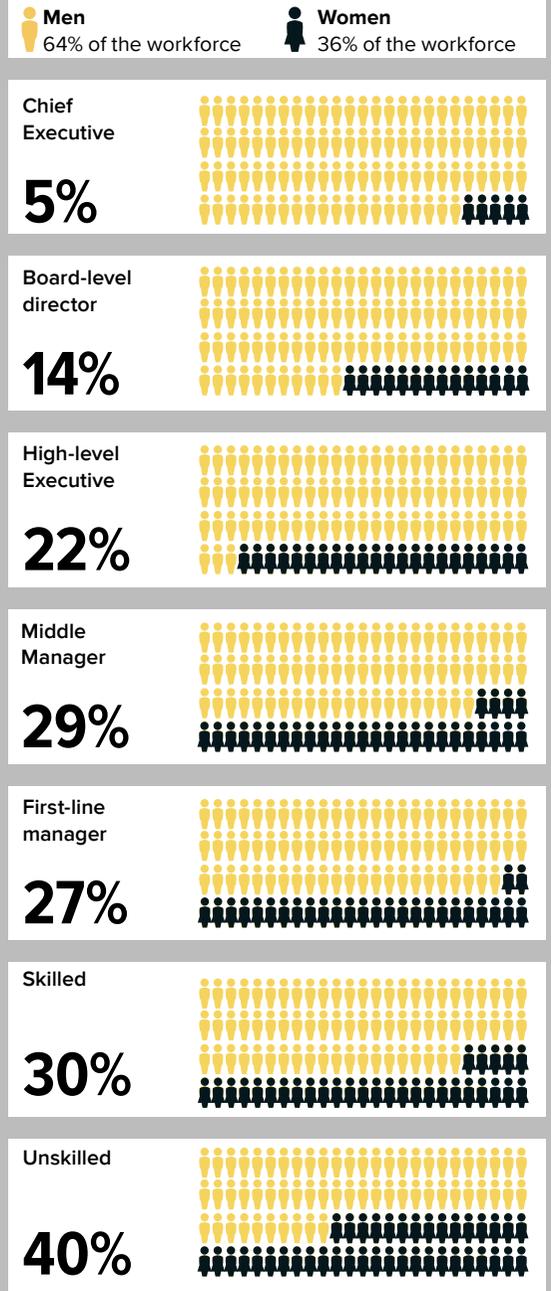
Fewer women make the move to first-line manager (men hold 73% of first-line posts, compared to 27% held by women). Women are getting stuck early in their career, meaning there are less women in the pipeline to advance to more senior roles.

Our research found that job design, combined with stereotyped perceptions about what makes a good operational leader, discourage women from pursuing senior operational roles. Women in the meat sector find it easier to pursue careers in Marketing, Finance, HR, R&D and Quality roles – yet these roles are rarely career stepping stones for the most senior roles.

To get more women into the most senior leadership roles, the meat sector needs to focus on attracting more women into commercial and operational roles and repairing the broken rungs in career ladders to advance more women up the talent pipeline.

The position is better in some of the larger global businesses that have well-progressed Diversity and Inclusion strategies and practices.

% OF MEN COMPARED TO WOMEN AT EACH LEVEL IN THE SECTOR



SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

Changing the balance of senior women in the sector requires concerted focus, action and commitment. Industry-specific actions to repair the broken rungs in the career ladder and create a better pipeline of talent include:

- ✓ targeted development interventions (e.g. mentoring, sponsorship schemes, development programmes, coaching) to help women shift into first-line manager roles and to help women move into the most senior management roles;
- ✓ targeted development interventions (e.g. mentoring, sponsorship schemes, development programmes, coaching) that support senior staff in Marketing, Finance, HR, R&D and Quality roles to build the broader commercial experience required to move into more senior roles;
- ✓ monitoring, reporting and acting on recruitment outcomes for first line manager-level, high executive-level, and board-level roles;
- ✓ strengthening recruitment practices that encourage diversity and counteract bias (see the recruitment audit and action plan toolkit referred to in the ‘Useful links’ section of this report); and
- ✓ creating robust early-years provision – work experience, apprenticeships, graduate entry, internships and direct entry – targeting girls and women and aiming for a minimum of gender-balanced intakes.

KEY THEME 4: STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND CREATING VISIBLE ROLE MODELS ...

ASPIRE AND INSPIRE

Networks play a vital role in career advancement for women. They provide access to jobs, development opportunities, feedback and information.

In organisations and sectors where there are fewer women at senior levels, there are fewer opportunities for senior women to network together. Access to external networking groups can provide the support, contacts and encouragement that women in more gender-balanced sectors might normally find within their workplace.

Participants cited both male and female mentors as having an important role in helping them to make key decisions and supporting them in their careers. Their mentors included colleagues, women working in other parts of the industry and previous leaders. When it comes to designing mentoring programmes for women, formal programmes deliver the best results.

Women who are matched with a mentor through a formal programme are 50% more likely to receive a promotion than women who find a mentor informally¹². Formal mentoring programmes bypass the discomfort that many senior white men have around reaching out to more junior white, black and ethnic minority women (who do not always feel comfortable asking to be mentored by senior men).

The presence of role models, who lead in a way that other women aspire to, contributes to women staying and developing their career within a business. The absence of role models and of the opportunity to see women working in next-step and senior roles gives the impression that those roles are not available or suited to women.

Participants commented on the absence of authentic role models. There are fewer women at senior levels in the meat sector and therefore fewer role models.

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

Ways in which organisations in the meat sector can help women to strengthen their networks include:

- ✓ creating formal mentoring schemes that match senior leaders with emerging female talent;
- ✓ sponsoring and supporting women to take part in industry-wide networking events and groups;
- ✓ participating in Meat Business Women's One to Watch prize (UK only) to showcase female talent in the sector and make role models more visible; and
- ✓ participating in Meat Business Women's mentoring service and encouraging senior female and male leaders to sign up as mentors.



“It’s about being positive as a woman and promoting the industry ... We all have ... to stand up and help who is coming behind us.”

KEY THEME 5: THE WAY WE WORK DOESN'T WORK ...

GENDER PROOFING WORKING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS

Workplace flexibility is an essential enabler for creating an inclusive workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged perceptions about what is possible, and greater workplace flexibility is becoming the norm.

Creating working models that support women and men with family responsibilities is one of the most important actions that businesses can take to enable women to progress into leadership roles.¹³

Women are more likely to work flexibly and more likely to take time out of their careers because of caring responsibilities. Flexible working is not just about part-time working – it includes different hours, homeworking, term-time working, condensed hours, job shares and career breaks. Flexible working is a key career enabler for many people with caring responsibilities.

A lack of ‘family flexibility’ was cited as a reason for women not applying for next-step jobs and for women on leadership programmes leaving the industry rather than taking up leadership positions.

Women in the study described a double negative of the gender-based job design (e.g. strength requirements) together with the lack of flexible working patterns – resulting in roles with ‘designed-in’ unsuitability for women. Increased automation and technology create opportunities to redesign roles so that they can be performed by women or men.

There is a perception that senior roles in the sector involve 24/7 availability. Some women are making a conscious choice not to move to more senior levels in their organisation because the expectations of additional hours and 24/7 availability are unachievable and unattractive.

Flexible working is often seen as a ‘discretionary benefit’ that employees can apply for, rather than a business tool that allows organisations to attract and retain talent. There is a perception that part-time work is not promoted but is instead tolerated as a way of keeping talented staff members who previously worked full-time. Women in more progressive organisations in the sector described how remote and flexible working arrangements have enabled their careers and increased their commitment to their employers.

Many organisations have clear, structured career entry routes for school leavers and graduates, but few provide re-entry routes for those who have taken time out of the workplace. Women are more likely to take time out of the workplace than men, and therefore these barriers have a disproportionate impact on women’s careers.

SPOTLIGHT ON BEST PRACTICE

Businesses can drive the inclusion benefits of flexible working by:

- ✓ consciously using technology and automation advances to design gender neutral roles;
- ✓ capitalising on the learnings from COVID-19 by identifying ways to normalise flexible working across a wider range of roles and organisational levels;
- ✓ providing clear, structured routes back into work for women who have taken maternity leave or career breaks, for example returners programmes, returnships and alumni events;
- ✓ challenging long hours and the culture of 24/7 availability; and
- ✓ exploring what the unconscious ‘ideal worker’ norm looks like and how this is influencing job design; then, if the ideal worker norm is full-time, identifying and implementing ways of challenging this.

“Production lines aren’t flexible – once the line is running it’s running. The ideal worker is someone who can do 12 hours, part-timers are harder to fit in.”



CASE STUDIES

Our research identified industry 'bright spots', organisations whose gender inclusion performance is better than average or who are using innovative ways to create a more inclusive workplace.

Here are three case studies of small changes that businesses can make:



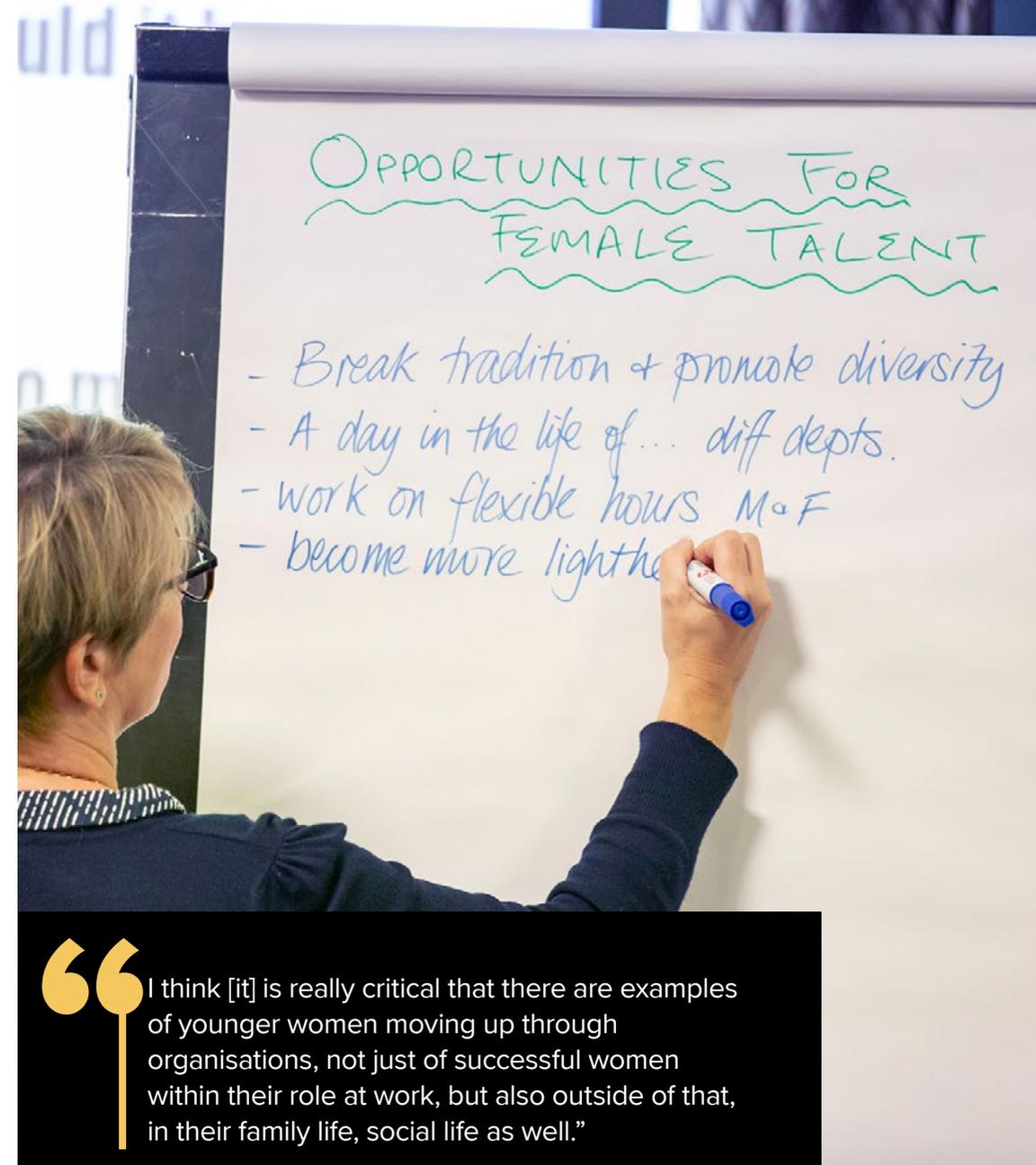
Moy Park: Shifting perceptions and making female talent visible



OBE Organic: Strengthening women's network



The Linden Food Group: Building a pipeline of female talent



“I think [it] is really critical that there are examples of younger women moving up through organisations, not just of successful women within their role at work, but also outside of that, in their family life, social life as well.”



Moy Park

Shifting perceptions and making female talent visible



The challenge

Moy Park, a European food company, wanted to showcase the wide range of career opportunities available to women, as well as shift traditional attitudes about the type of work that women do in the sector and attract more female candidates.

When asked why she wanted to be part of the social media champions team, Alana said:

“Being a Social Media Champion has allowed me to step outside my current role and experience different areas and departments beyond the world of technical. The social media role provides a platform to showcase what the graduate programme has to offer and highlighting how women within Moy Park are excelling and progressing into managerial positions.”

The action

Alana Buckley and Shauneen Beggan are Graduate Management Trainees working within the technical team at Moy Park. They were given the opportunity to join the Social Media Champions team, as part of Moy Park’s drive to make its diverse talent visible outside the business. Alana’s first post showed her carrying out auditing in the factory as an example of the key roles performed within a food manufacturing environment.

Previous posts by the Social Media Champions have included a vlog of a “day in the life” of a graduate trainee and many photographs showing the different types of opportunities available to Moy Park graduate trainees across Twitter and LinkedIn, promoting careers in the food industry to attract a similar group of diverse, bright, young talent.

Moy Park plan to continue this great work and are designing a series of posts to showcase the journeys of previous women graduate trainees and how they have been successful in senior management roles.

Moy Park have also overhauled their marketing material, to enable a true representation of women in the workplace in roles that would not originally have been deemed ‘female orientated’. This has included new and updated leaflets and will continue into 2021 with a revamp of the company’s Early Careers web pages.

The outcome

Nicola Hayward, Early Careers and Apprenticeship Manager, commented:

“By using social media to break down barriers and eliminate gender stereotypes, we hope these posts will encourage more people to consider roles within the meat industry and highlight that Moy Park provides fantastic opportunities to all.”



OBE Organic

Strengthening women's network



The challenge

OBE Organic, an Australian premium organic beef business, have a deep commitment to sustainability and Diversity and Inclusion, evidenced through their Flourish sustainability program. Dalene Wray, OBE Organic's Managing Director, noticed that indigenous women and women at early-career stage and from smaller businesses had less access to professional networking events in the industry.

The action

OBE Organic sponsor tickets at key industry networking events to which they invite women who would not otherwise have such an opportunity. Dalene soon identified that buying tickets & inviting female and indigenous peers was not enough – she needed to work out how to ensure that her guests made it to the event.

Dalene realised that many women find it daunting to arrive alone to a networking event and be one of only a handful of women or persons of colour, in the room. Small changes such as meeting her guests ahead of the event, walking with them to the event and proactively hosting them & supporting them at the event, all contribute to her female guests feeling more comfortable and subsequently benefiting more meaningfully, from these networking opportunities.

The outcome

Women get access to professional networks at an earlier career stage, have positive experiences of professional networking and spend time with inspiring role-model women.



The Linden Food Group

Building a pipeline of female talent



The challenge

The Linden Food Group knew they needed to grow and promote their own internal talent to create better gender representation in their business; they took a long-term perspective that delivered results.

The action

The Linden Food Group have been focused on embracing diversity in the workplace for the last decade. The benefits of this effort were realised in October 2016 when the group appointed their first two female directors to the board – Group Human Resources Director and Retail Sites Director. Until this point the board had been exclusively male. These appointments marked a very significant moment in the history of the business and communicated clearly that there was a strong desire for women to hold leadership and management positions into the future.

The appointments underlined the group's commitment to building the career ladder for women and creating a strong pipeline of female talent.

Coincidentally, one of the newly appointed directors was about to go on her second maternity leave from the business; her appointment thus sent a clear message about the group's commitment to beating maternal bias in the workplace.

The second female director initially joined the company as junior management in 2007 and progressed her career through various levels of management to board level – strong evidence of the Linden Food Group's commitment to nurturing its internal talent.

The outcome

Through a diverse executive and leadership team, the Linden Food Group have driven growth and supported their employees to fulfil their career aspirations. They are focused on promoting internal talent and helping their people find their voice and vision, and this in turn has led to the success of the business.



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Driving gender representation in the meat sector checklist

Themes	What can the sector as a whole do?	What can individual businesses do?
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECTOR ... PERCEPTION NEED NOT BE REALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in national programmes that showcase the best of the industry. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell compelling stories that showcase the sector's positives of contribution to community and society. <input type="checkbox"/> Make female talent at all levels visible so people can imagine themselves working in the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create an engagement strategy that positively positions your business with women. <input type="checkbox"/> Make your female talent more visible within and outside the business. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your recruitment practices, website content and social media presence are equally attractive to women as to men.
MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA ... IT HAS TO BE NOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Put Diversity and Inclusion on the agenda at key sector events. <input type="checkbox"/> Enable benchmarking and best-practice sharing. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish sector champions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a senior inclusion and diversity lead. <input type="checkbox"/> Hear and share the experiences of women in your workplace. <input type="checkbox"/> Gather the data that tells you how you are currently performing. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a gender diversity strategy and action plan.
TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER ... IT REQUIRES ONGOING FOCUS, FROM HIRE TO RETIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Senior leaders to agree and actively champion an aligned position on the importance of diverse talent being attracted and retained in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Map your business gender data and identify any rungs that are broken and where these are. <input type="checkbox"/> Put in place development actions to help women shift into first-line manager roles and to help women move into the most senior management roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Support senior women in Marketing, Finance, HR, R&D and Quality roles to build the broader commercial experience required to move into more senior roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthen recruitment practices that encourage diversity and counteract bias.
STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND CREATING VISIBLE ROLE MODELS ... ASPIRE AND INSPIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create more inclusive networking opportunities at industry events and encourage ongoing conversations about the importance of positive role modelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create formal mentoring schemes. <input type="checkbox"/> Support women to take part in industry-wide networking events and groups.
THE WAY WE WORK DOESN'T WORK ... GENDER PROOFING WORKING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shine a light and champion where different approaches work, especially capitalising on technology post-Covid-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify ways to normalise flexible working across a wider range of roles and organisational levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide routes back into work for women who have taken maternity leave or career breaks. <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge long-hours cultures.

How does Meat Business Women enable positive change?

Meat Business Women supports the global industry, businesses and individual women working across the meat industry, by offering:

Specific gender-inclusion toolkits and resources.

Monthly international-member virtual webinars with industry and personal development experts.

Access to a trial mentoring portal with mentoring best-practice guidance and resources.

Conferences and networking events in each territory, working closely with our trusted territory partners.

A proactive meaningful pillar of Corporate Social Responsibility, which can be used in gender-pay reporting.

Positive role models via the annual One to Watch Prize.

Corporate case studies for strategic partners, which are published on the Meat Business Women website and social media channels.

Content to share at careers fairs and proof of positive action.

Opportunities for businesses to become involved in new Meat Business Women initiatives, including the creation of the Meat Business Women accreditation.

See what the industry says about us [here](#).



INSPIRE · NETWORK · GROW

About Meat Business Women

Meat Business Women is the global professional networking group for women working across the meat industry. Assuring the sustainability of our sector by attracting and retaining the best possible talent, our mission is to:

INSPIRE: Develop the image, culture and landscape of the meat industry to make it more attractive to female talent.

NETWORK: Skilfully improve networking.

GROW: Nurture new female entrants into the sector through networking, education and mentoring.

Our values are:



We champion the meat industry, as a great place to build a fulfilling life-long career where individuals can express their full potential.



We encourage and support a well-connected global professional membership of like-minded, hardworking, ambitious people.



We advocate diversity and inclusivity as being critical to the attractiveness, resilience and future success of our sector.



We inspire innovative thinking and collaborative relationships that will positively influence our sector by delivering higher performance on a global scale.

Meat Business Women is a community of over 5000 women across the world representing the entire breadth of the supply chain.

In 2019, Meat Business Women was recognised by the United Nations for fulfilling one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

For more information visit www.meatbusinesswomen.org

About Niteo Development

Niteo Development is a leadership and inclusion consultancy organisation. Our purpose is to support and empower individuals and organisations to create authentic, inclusive and balanced leadership, and build capacity to respond to an increasingly complex world. We run research and development programmes globally.

For more information contact team@niteodevelopment.com

Research team

This global research was commissioned by Meat Business Women and delivered by Niteo Development with the support of Meat Business Women Chair Laura Ryan and postgraduate student Harriet Harman.

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Useful links

Practical ways to interrupt bias:

Access free toolkits that you can use to interrupt implicit bias in the workplace here:

<https://biasinterrupters.org/>

Gender and anti-racism resource:

Access free resources to build a gender neutral and anti-racism business here:

<https://leanin.org/about>

Becoming a better ally:

Learn how to become a better ally here:

<https://malechampionsofchange.com/> and here:

<https://leanin.org/tips/mvp>

Removing roadblocks to conversations about gender and race:

Learn how to get comfortable with uncomfortable conversations about gender and race here:

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/overcoming-conversation-roadblocks-infographic/>

Making your recruitment processes inclusive:

Use this free toolkit to audit your recruitment process, remove bias and increase the number of women in your talent pipeline here:

<https://niteo-development.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Recruitment+Audit+Tool.xlsx>



Endnotes

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- 3 Margaret McDonagh and Lorna Fitzsimons, 'Womencount2020: Role, Value, and Number of Female Executives in the FTSE 350' (2020, The Pipeline).
- 4 Greg Pellegrino, Sally D'Amato and Anne Weisberg, 'The gender dividend: Making the business case for investing in women' (2011, Deloitte).
- 5 David A.H. Brown, Debra L. Brown and Vanessa Anastasopoulos, 'Women on boards: Not just the right thing ... but the bright thing' (2002, Conference Board of Canada).
- 6 David M. Kaplan, Jack W. Wiley and Carl P. Maertz, 'The role of calculative attachment in the relationship between diversity climate and retention' 50 Human Resources Management (2011), 2.
- 7 McKinsey & Company, 'The future of women at work: Transitions in the age of automation' (McKinsey Global Institute, June 2019).
- 8 'Diversity in Food and Grocery 2019 Edition: An in-depth report from The MBS Group, IGD and in association with PwC' (2019, The MBS Group)
- 9 'From intention to action: Diversity in hospitality, travel & leisure – The 2020 WiHTL Annual Report' (2020, The MBS Group).
- 10 'Hampton-Alexander Review: FTSE Women Leaders – Improving gender balance in FTSE Leadership' (November 2019).
- 11 'Hampton-Alexander Review: FTSE Women Leaders – Improving gender balance in FTSE Leadership' (November 2019)
- 12 Nancy Carter and Christine Silva, 'Mentoring: necessary but insufficient for advancement' (2010 Catalyst)
- 13 Melanie Sanders, Jayne Hrdlicka, Meredith Hellicar, Dale Cottrell and Joanna Knox, 'What stops women from reaching the top? Confronting the tough issues' Bain Brief, November 2011: <https://www.bain.com/insights/what-stops-women-from-reaching-the-top/>