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Press release

WOMEN MAKE UP JUST 36% OF MEAT INDUSTRY WORKFORCE, 14% OF BOARD-LEVEL DIRECTOR POSITIONS AND ONLY 5% OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE ROLES, NEW REPORT FINDS

A new international report has for the first time established how many women are working within the meat sector. It found that women make up only 36% of the meat industry workforce and are under-represented at every level above junior positions, holding just 14% of board-level director roles and just 5% of chief executive roles.

The independent report, commissioned by Meat Business Women, also identified several 'broken rungs' in the career ladder that prevent women in the meat sector from advancing to more senior roles. It suggests women find it easier to pursue careers in Marketing, Finance, HR, R&D and Quality fields – however those disciplines still rarely act as stepping stones into the most senior positions.

Meat Business Women founder Laura Ryan says a lack of gender representation is putting at risk the future success and sustainability of the meat sector. "This report should be a wake-up call for the meat sector. Our findings show just how much the meat industry is lagging behind other sectors, including grocery, when it comes to creating workplaces that attract and promote female talent. In doing so, it is failing to reap the rewards that come from creating and nurturing a diverse workforce."

Ryan continues: "It's been asserted that companies which have executive committees with female membership of at least 33% have a net profit margin over ten times greater than those companies with no women at that level. Fundamentally businesses with diverse workforces are more profitable and have better share prices".

The new report, which draws on survey data from the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, highlights that the lack of formalised mentoring, networking opportunities and senior female role models is a particular source of frustration for women in the sector.

The report finds that visible role models who lead in an aspirational way help attract and retain talent within an organisation. The report flags though that by having relatively low numbers of women in senior roles the meat industry gives the impression that leadership positions are either not available or not suited to women.

Ryan says: "The message we're hearing from women in the meat industry is loud and clear: they love the sector, they're excited about the opportunities it offers and they want to help it succeed, but certain barriers exist. Together industry and Meat Business Women can break those barriers down."

"The good news from our research is that there are lots of practical steps companies can take to improve gender representation and ensure female talent can thrive. It is our hope that the sector uses the insights from this report to better understand how it can create a diverse and inclusive workforce. Meat Business Women is already partnering with a significant number of organisations towards that goal."

Meat Business Women intends to use the findings of this report to continue its support of the meat industry through a portfolio of initiatives such as mentoring programmes, networking events, development toolkits and other resources.



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Meat Business Women was launched in 2015 with a goal of assuring sustainability of the meat sector by attracting and retaining the best possible talent. The organisation now 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.

To view the report or learn more about Meat Business Women visit meatbusinesswomen.org.

- ENDS -

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Background information

The full report including methodology can be downloaded at:

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!An5XKleAG3Y1b-2X8ghem1ddbrQ?e=Cbivji>

KEY THEMES & SUPPORTING QUOTES

1. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECTOR

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.

"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." – survey participant

2. KEY THEME 2: MOVING INCLUSION UP THE AGENDA

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.

"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." – survey participant

3. KEY THEME 3: TACKLING THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER

There are 'broken rungs' in the career ladder (i.e. key career steps where men are more likely to progress than women). 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.

"There are pockets where women do well – Quality, R&D, Finance and HR; outside of these it's much harder for women to get senior roles." – survey participant



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

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

"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." – survey participant

5. KEY THEME 5: 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.

"Women leave the sector too quickly – the early-years roles are not fun, and the work patterns aren't conducive to caring responsibilities. We end up with a gap in the pipeline which doesn't get refilled." – survey participant