

# Eight reasons to work in FMCG

By Tim Morris, Coriolis Research.

**Y**OUR first question is probably “what is FMCG?”. It used to be called the grocery industry, now it’s just called FMCG — an ugly acronym for Fast Moving Consumer Goods — which translated into English means things you buy on a regular basis at places like your local supermarket.

The FMCG industry encompasses many of New Zealand’s best-known companies, including Goodman Fielder, Mainland and Hubbards, as well as major multinational groups such as Coke, Colgate-Palmolive and Heinz-Watties. It also encompasses the non-commodity exports of the agricultural sector from companies like Fonterra, Zespri and Richmond.

The FMCG industry has a wholesale turnover of \$9.8 billion representing \$15 billion in retail sales. It accounts for \$2.4 billion in imports and \$3.5 billion in exports. This makes it slightly larger than the electricity, gas and water sector and slightly smaller than the health sector. It employs 35,600 people directly and 147,800 people in the wider sector.

So why should you consider a career in FMCG?

## 1 It’s a stable industry

There’s a saying in the industry that goes “everyone has to eat”. To this I would add “and wash their clothes and brush their teeth”. Unlike some industries, such as automobiles, computers and airlines, FMCG does not suffer from mass layoffs every time the economy starts to dip. You may put off buying a car, but you don’t put off dinner. This lends FMCG a level of job security unknown in other industries.

## 2 It’s a high-profile industry

Everyone is a consumer. This makes the industry personally relevant as everyone is personally affected. Look at how many of the headlines in this paper over the past six months have been about FMCG-related topics — protests against the genetic modification of foods, the growing problem of obesity, the Pan Pharmaceuticals recall. People get more excited about and care more deeply about the products they put in their bodies or use everyday. This can be good or bad, but it’s never boring.

## 3 You gain experience very quickly

Imagine you and a friend both go to work in sales. They take a job selling cars and make two or three sales a month if they’re

lucky. You take a job selling wine and sell to 10 or more accounts a day. Who has more experience at the end of two years? No matter what area you want to work in — be it sales, marketing, operations, accounting, etc — you will get more experience in less time working in FMCG than in any other sector of the economy. Sometimes you may feel like you’ve been thrown in at the deep end, but you will quickly gain a firm grasp of basic business skills.

## 4 You can get wide-ranging experience

You have a wide range of choices when it comes to jobs and career paths in FMCG. You can work for a large multinational or a small, local company and everything in between. Most people who have been in FMCG for any length of time have worked in a wide range of roles. The ‘fast moving’ part of FMCG requires people who are flexible. Flexibility requires a wide toolkit and a range of experience. Progression from operations to sales to marketing are not uncommon; in smaller companies all three may occur in one role.

## 5 It’s an industry that thrives on innovation

FMCG offers an opportunity to express your creativity through developing new ideas for products, packaging, branding and advertising. There is a constant cycle of regular product improvements and updates as brands compete head-to-head on the shelf. There are also the new products that come out of nowhere to define a market; products like Lisa’s Hummus or Phoenix’s organic drinks.

## 6 There are nationwide opportunities, urban and rural

Unlike some industries that are concentrated in the major cities, FMCG offers opportunities nationwide to those that are interested. FMCG, through its connection to the primary sector, offers opportunities in smaller cities and rural areas. So the next time you are sitting in Auckland traffic dreaming of a better lifestyle in Tauranga or Blenheim, you can do something about it.

## 7 Your job can take you around the world

New Zealand is a highly respected training ground for FMCG skills and experience. There is a demand for the skills you learn here either close to home in Australia or further afield in places like Singapore, Thailand or France. The international offices of most FMCG multinationals regularly recruit staff from New Zealand, both for short projects or longer stints.

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## 8 Lots of opportunities for advancement

It’s generally accepted in the industry that people move around. Someone takes a new role to broaden their experience in a new area and someone else takes their job. Opportunities create opportunities, so whether you’re a new graduate with no idea what to do next or a experienced hand looking for a change, consider a career in the FMCG sector.

So if you are interested in a stable, high-profile, innovative job that can lead to a range of experiences and opportunities, then have a look through this supplement.

If you’re interested in more information on FMCG in New Zealand, there are a number of reports on the size and structure of the industry available for free on our website at [www.coriolisresearch.com/research](http://www.coriolisresearch.com/research)