

Labour

Canada's fruit and vegetable growers are fostering a highly sophisticated and modern agriculture sector of which Canadians can be proud. But without an adequate workforce to grow, harvest and pack it, produce rots in the field, on the tree, or on the vine, resulting in waste and financial loss. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour gap in horticulture was becoming a crisis, expected to increase to 46,500 jobs by 2025 – the largest labour gap in the agricultural sector.

Growers hire Canadians first, and conduct ongoing and rigorous recruitment. However, because agricultural jobs are generally located in rural communities and are seasonal in nature, it is extremely difficult to hire Canadians who are typically concentrated in urban centres and who generally prefer year-round work. When producers are unable to find enough Canadian workers, they access the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), or the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) to satisfy their labour needs.

The pandemic has only exacerbated labour-related challenges, as the logistical challenges of bringing in employees have posed a considerable threat to food production, food security and the integrity of the food supply chain in Canada. Growers have taken decisive action and incurred significant added costs to follow public health protocols and ensure the health and safety of their workers.

We are asking each party to commit to implementing policy to:

- ***Develop an Agriculture and Agri-Food Labour Strategy.***
- ***In both the short and longer term, work to improve service standards and processing times for applications under SAWP and the Agricultural Stream of the TFW Program.***
- ***Provide ESDC and IRCC with sufficient resources to efficiently manage the future flow of incoming workers.***
- ***Help streamline and standardize the LMIA application process by implementing a Recognized Employers Program, as per the HUMA report, FINA pre-Budget 2018 report, and the final report of the Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table.***
- ***Recognize the success and importance of the SAWP and ensure that Canadian horticultural producers continue to have access to it as a standalone program.***
- ***Publicly highlight positive examples of good HR management in SAWP and TFWP, help encourage the adoption of best practices, and communicate the programs' benefits to workers, consumers and farmers.***
- ***Increase funding for SAWP and TFWP Agricultural Stream administrators to address the increasing labour gap in Canadian horticulture and the government's increased export goals.***