

## Labour

Labour has a major impact on Canadian fruit and vegetable production. Without an adequate workforce to grow and harvest it, produce rots in the field, on the tree, or on the vine, resulting in waste and financial loss.

Canadian producers hire Canadians first and conduct ongoing and vigorous recruitment. However, because agricultural jobs are generally located in rural communities and are seasonal in nature, it is impossible to hire Canadians who generally prefer year-round work and who are concentrated in urban centres. 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.

## Background

- The labour gap in 2014 for horticulture commodities was 35,700. The SAWP and TFWP enabled farmers to successfully fill this labour gap.
- The labour gap in Canadian horticulture is expected to increase to 46,500 by 2025.
- Over half (53%) of the work required on Canadian farms is seasonal.
- The federal government intends to grow agri-food exports from \$56B - \$75B by 2025. More workers will be needed to achieve these targets.
- The produce sector value chain supports over 181,600 jobs in the Canadian economy.
- The SAWP is a program with 50 years of integrity that pre-exists the TFWP; both are regulated by the federal government.
- For every worker the SAWP employs, two full-time Canadian jobs are created elsewhere in the value chain.
- SAWP and TFWP employees receive a fair wage that helps them to better educate their children, increase their savings, get better healthcare, and purchase homes, vehicles, land, and livestock in their home countries.
- Due to the huge volume of applications, it currently takes months for the government to process Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) and work permits, even for employers who have been accessing the program for years, who have a clean record, and whose application details are the same as before.

## Action required

Canada's fruit and vegetable industry urges the federal government to:

- Implement a Trusted Employers Program to help streamline and standardize the LMIA application process, as per the HUMA Committee report. Employers should not have to re-submit all their paperwork with every application. Rather, they would simply note what has changed and resubmit.
- 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.