



Building the fresh produce workforce FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

TALKING POINTS

When in doubt, think Connect (why is it important to YOU?), Contrast (what's missing?), Solve (how can the government/candidate help?)

- **Connect:** The future fresh fruit and vegetable industry will require a domestic and international workforce with a wide range of skills, including an increasing focus on expertise in areas such as robotics and artificial intelligence, software engineering and programming, green energy systems and data analysis.
- **Contrast:** Canada's agricultural sector faces a critical workforce gap, with labour shortages persisting across all supply chain stages and in both urban and rural communities. Federal programs such as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program are essential but currently fall short of fully addressing the unique needs of the fresh produce industry, which require a specialized, timely workforce to manage perishable products and avoid delays or shortages that may directly impact food quality and availability.
- **Solve:** An effective National Workforce Strategy will require a total supply chain lens that considers and supports all aspects of the agri-food sector – from the farm to the dinner plate. The federal government has an important role to play in supporting educational efforts and raising awareness, especially among young and urban Canadians, about the significant and diverse opportunities available in our sector.

OUR ASKS TO POLITICAL PARTIES/CANDIDATES

1. Will your party support a strengthened food system and food security for all Canadians by adopting a whole-of-government agriculture and food production lens and making food production and access to food a whole-of-government priority in legislation, policy and crisis management?
2. Will your party implement a National Workforce Strategy to meet immediate labour needs and generate future interest in careers across the food supply chain through education, training and skills development?
3. Will your party commit to preserving the distinction between the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and other streams within the Temporary Foreign Worker program (TFWP), such as AgStream and the Low-Wage stream, and to establishing a permanent Recognized Employer Program under the TFWP?

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

- The fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain generates nearly \$15 billion of Canada's GDP and supports more than 185,000 jobs from coast to coast to coast (Conference Board of Canada, 2023).
- A Royal Bank of Canada report found that, by 2033, 40% of Canadian farm operators will retire, leaving a shortfall of 24,000 general farm, nursery and greenhouse workers (Royal Bank of Canada, 2023).
- Research has found that labour shortages have cost the fruit and vegetable industry hundreds of millions of dollars (Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council, 2019).

ABOUT CPMA

Based in Ottawa, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) is a not-for-profit organization representing companies active in the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, from the farm gate to the dinner plate spanning the entire produce industry. The Association's members include major growers, shippers, packers, and marketers; importers and exporters; transportation and logistics firms; brokers, distributors, and wholesalers, retailers, and foodservice distributors; and fresh cut operators and processors. Founded in 1925, CPMA is proud to represent more than 900 domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.