

Permanently Impermanent:

MIGRANT AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN CANADA

OUR VISION

It's 2030: Canada's vibrant, prosperous agricultural sector is a competitive world leader.



Migrant agricultural worker programs are simple to navigate and streamlined for employers, producers and administrators. The agricultural sector is well positioned for the next 50+ years, knowing there is a skilled and reliable workforce ready to respond to evolving demands, including climate change.

WHAT WE HEARD

Migrant workers and advocacy groups : precarious work environment, lack of oversight.

Farmers, employers and producers : confusing, difficult to navigate, siloed government departments.

Government: onerous, lengthy processes, costly.

Academics: climate change, labour shortages, human rights, Canada's international reputation.

WHAT WE KNOW

Three key themes revealed about the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program:

- 1** Reform over abolition
- 2** Power imbalance
- 3** Policy solutions, but no panacea



METHODOLOGY

1. Review of literature, informing the questions we asked and stakeholders we consulted
2. Consulted stakeholder groups (advocacy groups, employers, academics, Government of Canada)
3. Developed and then pitched our policy pathways to stakeholders for response

114,000

The labour shortage is expected to worsen from 60,000 workers (2016) to 114,000 (2025). This labour shortfall is three times greater than shortages in other Canadian industries.

Source: Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council

\$ 1.5 b

in lost sales resulting from the industry's 7% vacancy rate.

Source: Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council



SETTLEMENT

1. Enhance supports to ease settlement of migrant workers into Canadian society - measures to address the language, lifestyle and community needs of migrant workers to erode the barriers to rights and services experienced by workers, while also facilitating community-building.



2. Explore a pathway to permanent residency and could eventually lead to citizenship.

HEALTH CARE

3. Remove barriers to provincial health coverage.

4. Provide health-care coverage through currently established infrastructure for the Interim Federal Health Program for Refugees, that provides coverage to migrant workers that need to remain in Canada for medical reasons after expiration of their work permit.



PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

5. Ensure increased enforcement of workplace standards, including an increase in unannounced inspections.

6. Create a single office to co-ordinate all activity relating to migrant agricultural workers. This new office should oversee the creation of a federal-provincial secretariat to co-ordinate and align best practices between governments.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

7. Replace employer-tied work permits with flexible work permits, using a model that identifies provincial hiring needs by type and specialty, and hires workers to work for any agricultural employer within a province and specialty.

8. Governments should work together to examine the potential of a trusted employer program and parameters of entry.



CONCLUSION

Temporary foreign workers are too important to our agricultural system to not have an optimally efficient, sustainable program that works for employers and government while ensuring Canada is upholding the human rights of all those who call Canada home, whether permanently or temporarily. We seek policy solutions that create change while being fiscally and politically feasible.