



Agriculture Forecast to 2029

How Labour Challenges Will Shape the Future of Agriculture in Nova Scotia

With a high reliance on foreign labour and a rapidly widening labour gap, Nova Scotia's agriculture sector faces considerable challenges over the next decade.

Provincial Overview

In 2017, the province of Nova Scotia employed 6,600 people, or roughly 2% of Canada's agricultural workforce. Although it was the fourth smallest agriculture sector employer in Canada, it did have the highest share of agricultural workers of any Atlantic province.

The province's foreign workers are concentrated in three agriculture industries. Just under one in three (30%) are employed in the 'tree fruit and vine'* industry, slightly more than one in ten (11%) are employed in the 'greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture' industry, and slightly less than one in ten (9%) are employed in the 'field fruit and vegetable' industry.

Although Nova Scotia's share of Canada's agricultural workforce is small, Nova Scotia accounts for an outsized number of Canadian 'tree fruit and vine' workers and those employed in 'aquaculture'.

The province's agriculture sector relies heavily on foreign workers. In 2017, the sector employed 1,900 foreign workers, which represents roughly 29% of its total workforce. Only Ontario has a heavier reliance on this source of labour.

In 2017, the province's agriculture sector saw a significant labour gap, with its workforce requirements exceeding the domestic labour supply by 1,400 jobs. Even with help from the foreign labour force, the province's agricultural sector was still unable to fill 250 jobs in 2017, a shortfall that cost the industry \$33 million.

* The Labour Market Information data classifies Canada's agriculture sector into 11 commodity areas: 1) 'apiculture'; 2) 'aquaculture'; 3) 'beef'; 4) 'dairy'; 5) 'field fruit and vegetable'; 6) 'grain and oilseed'; 7) 'greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture'; 8) 'poultry and egg'; 9) 'sheep and goat'; 10) 'swine'; and 11) 'tree fruit and vine'.

In 2017, Nova Scotia's agriculture sector employed 6,585 people.

The province was unable to fill 251 jobs, which cost the industry \$33 million, or 5.9% of sales.

By 2029, the province will have 2,600 more jobs than the domestic labour force can fill.

Between now and 2029, the need for labour will grow and the available supply of domestic labour will shrink, caused in large part by a high percentage of workers lost to retirement. This will widen the labour gap even further and prevent the province's vital agriculture sector from reaching its full potential.

Labour Forecast

While the demand for labour in Nova Scotia will increase, the available pool of labour will trend in the opposite direction, causing the labour gap between the two to widen.

Rising production growth in some of Nova Scotia's key agriculture industries will increase the demand for labour by an average of 0.4% per year from now until 2029. In 2017, the sector required 6,800 workers; by 2029, it will need 7,200.



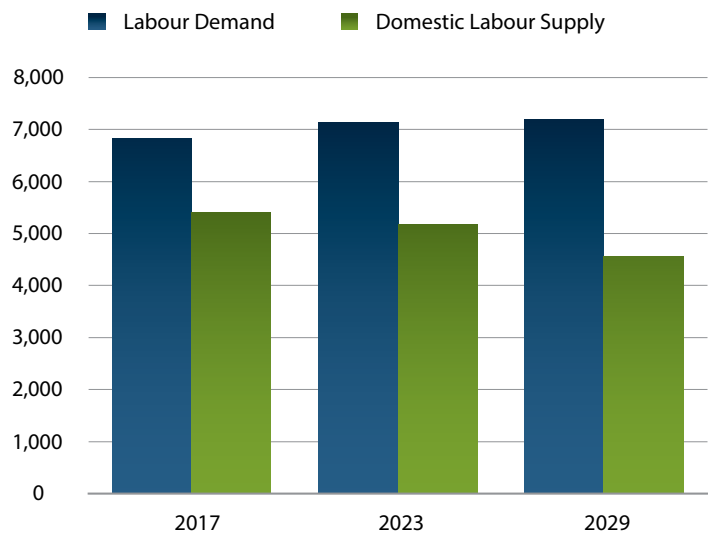
However, the domestic supply of labour will undergo a rapid decline over this same period. Mounting retirements and a shrinking number of young people in the province will result in a 1.4% per year reduction in the size of the province's agricultural labour pool.

As a result, the gap between the labour requirements of Nova Scotia's agriculture sector and the domestic labour pool is forecast to widen by an average of 5.2% per year. By 2029, 2,600 jobs are expected to be at risk of going unfilled due to a lack of domestic labour.

The province's 'tree fruit and vine' industry and its 'field fruit and vegetable' industry will account for the largest portions of the agricultural labour gap: approximately 1,500 jobs and 400 jobs in these industries respectively are expected to be at risk by 2029.

From an occupational perspective, Nova Scotia's agriculture sector will have the most trouble filling general farm worker positions and harvesting labourer positions. Indeed, by 2029, there will be 1,500 general farm worker jobs and 300 harvesting labourer jobs in excess of the available domestic labour pool.

The Labour Gap Widens for Nova Scotia's Agriculture Sector



Based on our 2018 survey of the province's agricultural employers:

- **41%** could not find enough workers
- **57%** of employers who experienced labour shortages lost sales as a result
- **24%** reported zero Canadian job applicants for job postings

Meeting the Challenge

Because of its heavy reliance on foreign workers, Nova Scotia has a high number of jobs that can't be filled by domestic workers. In 2017, the province had the third-largest labour gap relative to demand among the provinces.

Over the next few years, the effect of a high rate of retirement and a dwindling supply of young people in the province will increase this gap considerably. By 2029, there will not be enough domestic workers to fill over one in three jobs (37%) required for the agriculture sector to reach its production potential.

To address its agricultural labour issues, the province will need to overcome a number of key challenges:

- Declining populations in rural areas make it difficult for employers with operations in rural areas to attract workers. More than one in three employers (35%) cited this as a challenge, compared to an average of 27% across Canada.
- More than half of employers (52%) suggested that insufficient compensation compared to other sectors was a retention challenge, which is one of the highest shares of any province.
- Lack of experience in the sector hinders recruitment in Nova Scotia. Nearly half of agricultural employers (46%) cite this as a barrier to recruitment, compared to a national average of just 30%.
- A high reliance on foreign workers puts the province's agriculture sector at risk, as policy changes could reduce or even eliminate this source of labour in the future.



The province's agriculture sector also has strengths that it could leverage:

- Nova Scotia's agriculture sector has the lowest voluntary turnover rate in the country. The province's voluntary turnover rate is just 2%, compared to 10% across Canada.
- Tapping into pools of workers who may only be interested in working part of the year (e.g. retired people) may help to address the sector's need for large numbers of workers for limited periods of time.
- Access to training programs, mentorships, and internships has the potential to create more skilled labour.

Over the forecast period, Nova Scotia will need to find ways to strengthen the domestic labour pool in order to address its fast-growing labour gap, avoid financial losses, and reach its growth potential.

To read the accompanying report, or to access additional provincial, commodity, or national fact sheets and reports, please visit www.AgriLMI.ca.



About This Fact Sheet

The data cited in this fact sheet is based on an update to the Labour Market Information (LMI) study that the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) undertook between 2014 and 2016. Information was collected by modelling labour demand and supply by province, commodity, and occupation; conducting a survey of more than 1,700 sector stakeholders; and validating the results through webinars as well as an advisory group presentation.

The study was initiated by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC), a national, nonprofit organization focused on addressing human resource issues faced by agricultural businesses across Canada. For more information about the Council and its products and services for Canada's agriculture sector, please visit www.cahrc-ccrha.ca.

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