

INDUSTRY NEWS | PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES | SUPPORT FOR THE AGRICULTURE | AND MORE

# AGRI WORKFORCE MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2025

**HOW CAHRC AND POST-  
SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS  
ARE SHAPING THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
AGRICULTURE TALENT**

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**HOW NWIA EVENTS  
FUNDING IS TRANSFORMING  
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN  
AGRICULTURE**

**CAHRC JOINS  
BIOENTERPRISE CANADA'S  
FOOD & AGRI-TECH ENGINE**

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**AGRIWORKFORCE PULSE**

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**TFWP SCHOOL: HIRING  
FOREIGN WORKERS IN  
AGRICULTURE**



**CAHRC-CCRHA**

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council  
Conseil canadien pour les ressources humaines  
en agriculture



# OUR NATIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors are experiencing severe chronic labour and skills shortages while growing one of Canada's largest employment and economic sectors. A national, actionable roadmap will create the desired workforce of the future that addresses immediate labour gaps and systemic issues. The National Workforce Strategic Plan (NWSP) has entered its next phase of work. The initiative remains the same, industry stakeholders will embark on a new set of action items while continuing to amplify the great work already happening. Moving forward, the NWSP will maintain three working groups. As we acknowledge the shift toward AI, digitalization and automation, the workplan will reflect that and pursue actions that will better prepare the sector for adoption.



# OUR VISION AND NEXT STEPS



## **Perception and Awareness of Industry and Careers**

*By 2030, the number of people entering the sector has increased due to positive perceptions of employment in the industry and greater awareness of the variety of occupations suited to various skill sets, the diverse communities in which careers are available and the paths to career advancement.*

The perception of the industry and awareness of opportunities in the sectors is crucial to its growth and sustainability. This working group will amplify programs and bring greater awareness of career opportunities in agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing to potential employees — including newcomers to Canada, job seekers not already connected to the industry, members of underrepresented groups and secondary and post-secondary students.

Likewise, support will be given for employers looking to recruit a generation of employees to join the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors. As an industry that has been built on networking, it is paramount that we expand the network and invite those new to our industry in to gain expertise, knowledge and understanding on our common goal to feed people both in Canada and abroad.



## **People and Workplace Culture**

*By 2030, the sector is viewed as a desired choice for work in Canada by job seekers and workers*

Industry initiatives are underway to identify workers coming from other sectors who have a valuable skill set for agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing. Industry is also working to highlight the technological opportunities to high school and post secondary graduates. Additionally, the expansion of work integrated learning opportunities allows students to explore career opportunities prior to entering the workforce. By crafting a narrative to show a pathway to success in the agriculture industry, recruitment will be less challenging. This working group will continue to develop resources and case studies to help outline best management practices the industry is using to support a safe and inviting workplace culture.



## Immigration and Foreign Workers

*By 2025, foreign workers are publicly recognized as a valued pillar of Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing workforce. By 2025, Canada has publicly accepted programs to facilitate the entry of foreign workers and new Canadians into Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors .*

The Immigration and Temporary Foreign Workers Working Group understands the importance of temporary foreign workers to Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing workforce. The working group has conducted research to develop policy recommendations to amplify the importance of the TFW programs. Recommendations also looked at ensuring there are clear paths to permanent residency for those who wish to use it, as well as the need for ensuring the proper infrastructure and supports are available for both employers and employees.

At this time the Immigration and Temporary Foreign Worker Working Group has concluded its strategic work. The members continue to meet when necessary to advance any new discussion pieces.



## Skill Development

*By 2030, a National Skills Strategy ensures that the sector's workforce is appropriately skilled.*

While research shows the sector is well situated to make advancements in technology, there still remains some significant hurdles to overcome, both for primary producers and further down the supply chain in food and beverage manufacturing. It is important to note the increased use of automation and technology, while a proposed solution to the chronic shortage of labour, may not lead to a decreased demand for labour but instead change the skills sets required. It would also help improve the productivity and competitiveness of Canada's agricultural and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.

Many of the projects in this working group are ever green, each step of improvement, moving the industry forward. The development of the National Skills Strategy continues as a registry of the current and future skills needed for the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors. Using the National Occupational Standards, CAHRC has developed the Skills Inventory Framework





## Skill Development

which outlines in varying detail what is required for a job. The aim is to provide this information to stakeholders, potential employees seeking job opportunities and employers looking to build job postings and develop responsibilities. It will also be promoted to curriculum designers to ensure the full set of skills are covered over the course of a program. This project was developed to support agricultural career as Food Processing Skills Canada has a well developed Learning and Recognition Framework for food processing careers!

CAHRC has also launched its geographical mapping of skills, highlighting where the skills needs are and if there are skilled individuals available to fill that gap.



## Automation and Technology

*By 2030, automation and technology helps address labour demand and increases productivity and competitiveness.*

The industry is experiencing a critical transition to automation and technology in each sector as it continues to experience shortages in labour. Although it is not the only answer to the falling labour supply, the Working Group will continue to examine the increased need for capital investments and its correlation to labour productivity. They will also investigate funding opportunities to increase the adoption of automation. Moreover, they will explore current programming available for upskilling and re-skilling of employees due to changes in technology.

As we make advancements in technology, we must also examine the risk along the way. Legal obligations and the regulatory environment on automation and technology is constantly adapting, so an environmental scan will be commissioned to understand what is currently regulated and where the gaps are.

## OUR PARTNERS



**CAHRC-CCRHA**  
Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council  
Conseil canadien pour les ressources humaines  
en agriculture



Food and  
Beverage  
Canada



Aliments  
et boissons  
Canada

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**To learn more about the issues and CAHRC's plan to address them, [click here](#).**

*Due to reduced funding capacity to produce this publication, this issue of Agri Workforce Matters will be available in English only.*



A woman wearing a green jumpsuit, a dark cap, and blue gloves is using a high-pressure yellow hose to clean equipment in a facility. The equipment consists of rows of white cylindrical units mounted on wooden racks. The background shows more of the facility with various pipes and structural elements.

**GET INVOLVED:  
A STRONG WORKFORCE  
STARTS WITH YOU.**

[outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca)





Dear readers,

As the combines roll and another harvest season comes to a close, we find ourselves at a moment of both reflection and renewal. Across the country, employers, educators, and communities continue to navigate labour challenges with creativity and determination. What gives me confidence is the momentum we see building: the conversations are louder, the collaborations are stronger, and the solutions are becoming more tangible every day.

At CAHRC, this momentum is reflected in several important developments. Our partnership with Bioenterprise Canada is opening new doors to connect workforce development with innovation, ensuring that labour market intelligence and HR solutions are aligned with the technologies shaping our future. Also, [our micro-credentials and training opportunities](#), from Women in Agriculture leadership, to HR management, to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) School are equipping employers and workers alike with practical, timely skills.

We also continue to invest in people and culture. This issue highlights how National Women in Agriculture (NWiA) events funding is transforming women's leadership in agriculture, how Work-Integrated Learning placements are preparing students for tomorrow's careers,

and how resources like the [AgriHR Toolkit](#) are making day-to-day hiring more manageable. These stories remind us that building a resilient workforce is not only about numbers, it is about inclusion, leadership, and community.

Looking ahead, the fall calendar is full. Industry gatherings, training cohorts, and new program launches all point to the same reality: **our sector is not standing still**. We are leaning into change, whether through technology adoption, new partnerships, or the steady work of building HR capacity on the ground.

As always, CAHRC is here as your partner. From labour market research to hands-on tools and training, our goal is to ensure you have the support you need to build and sustain your workforce. Together, we can continue to strengthen Canadian agriculture and food for the seasons and generations ahead.

Warm regards,



**Jennifer Wright**  
Executive Director  
**Canadian Agricultural  
Human Resource Council**





# ABOUT CAHRC

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The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) is a national, non-profit organization focused on addressing human resource issues facing agricultural businesses across Canada.

This means representing and supporting agriculture in all forms, from farmers and ranchers to processors, packagers, food scientists, mechanics, veterinarians and much, much more.

We offer expertise and tools that can be tailored to meet the needs of owners, operators and workers throughout the sector.

This includes:

- Up-to-date HR training
- Wage subsidy and skill development programs
- Industry networking opportunities
- 1:1 consultation
- Insight on emerging issues like succession planning, finding skilled workers and improving farm safety.

**Contact us** to learn more about how you can take advantage of our services.



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## CAHRC'S CORNER

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- CAHRC JOINS BIOENTERPRISE CANADA'S FOOD & AGRI-TECH ENGINE



## CAHRC'S CORNER

### STAYING CONNECTED

#### BUILD YOUR TEAM'S SKILLS

Looking for flexible, focused training? CAHRC's microcredentials are designed for agriculture employers and employees who want practical skills without the long timelines. Current offerings include:

- **Women in Agriculture Leadership Development**
- **HR Management in Agriculture**
- **Temporary Foreign Worker Program School**

Thanks to the support of RBC and FCC, funded seats are available for selected programs. [Learn more.](#)



Foundation  
Fondation



#### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

These monthly one-hour conversations will bring together farmers, employers, educators, and more across the industry to:

- Reflect on what we've learned through this initiative
- Share how tools and training have made a difference in real communities
- Explore how we bring these services to more rural and remote areas
- Identify gaps and co-create solutions

Register [here](#) and watch the past sessions [here](#).



#### LEARN MORE ABOUT SEEDING DIGITAL SKILLS

Discover if the upcoming training is right for you!

Held in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, this program is a hands-on opportunity for agri-food and food processing businesses to adopt digital twin technology.

[Register for an info session to learn more.](#)



Funded by



#### BECOME A PARTNER

Want to strengthen Canada's agri-food workforce while showcasing your leadership? CAHRC's partnership program connects you with tailored HR solutions, exclusive industry insights, and national visibility. Join us in building a stronger, more resilient sector.

Contact us at [outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca) to learn more.





# STOP GUESSING. START SIMULATING.

Free training in Digital Twin technology for agri-food businesses

## PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- **Duration:** 12 weeks, online & flexible
- **Format:** Hands-on training with Unity
- **Includes:** Digital credential
- **Cost:** Fully funded (valued at \$15,000 USD)

## WHO IT'S FOR

Agri-food and food processing businesses looking to:

- Test changes before investing
- Boost efficiency
- Adopt innovation with confidence



## BUSINESS BENEFITS

- **Cut waste & downtime:** streamline your operations and save resources
- **Boost efficiency & profitability:** make smarter, data-driven decisions
- **Strengthen your workforce:** upskill employees with in-demand digital tools
- **Innovate with confidence:** test ideas safely before investing

Free training. Limited seats. Apply today.  [outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca)



## CAHRC'S CORNER

# CAHRC JOINS BIOENTERPRISE CANADA'S FOOD & AGRI-TECH ENGINE

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) has joined [Bioenterprise Canada's Food & Agri-Tech Engine](#), creating new opportunities to connect workforce development with innovation across the agriculture and agri-food sector.

The Food & Agri-Tech Engine, led by Bioenterprise, is a national commercialization platform that brings together accelerators, incubators, post-secondary institutions, government, and industry partners to drive innovation. By joining this network, CAHRC is linking its expertise in labour market intelligence and HR solutions with a powerful innovation ecosystem that reaches across the country.

"CAHRC brings unparalleled expertise in workforce development, and we're thrilled to welcome them to The Engine," says Dave Smardon, CEO of Bioenterprise Canada.

"Innovation depends on people, and this partnership will help ensure that Canadian agri-food innovators have access to the talent they need to grow and compete on a global stage."

For more than a decade, CAHRC has provided workforce research, HR tools, and industry-led strategies to help employers, associations, and policymakers build and sustain a qualified and resilient workforce. Its programs span labour market research, workforce development initiatives, HR resources and training, and projects supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in agriculture.

According to CAHRC's Executive Director Jennifer Wright, the collaboration builds on a shared commitment to strengthening the sector.



"We chose to partner with Bioenterprise because our missions align, both organizations are committed to strengthening Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector by equipping it with the knowledge, tools, and networks it needs to thrive," says Wright. "Through this partnership, we can better connect people, data, and solutions to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our industry."

By becoming part of the Engine, CAHRC will expand the reach of its labour market data and HR solutions to a broader network of agri-food innovators. The partnership also creates space for new collaborations among employers, industry groups, researchers, and policymakers working to address labour shortages, skills gaps, and workforce sustainability.

**Partnerships like this help build a more resilient workforce and a stronger agricultural sector, ensuring that Canadian agri-food continues to grow, innovate, and thrive well into the future.**



# PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF INDUSTRY AND CAREERS

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# BRIDGING THE GAP: HOW CAHRC AND POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS ARE SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AGRICULTURE TALENT

## Perception and Awareness: A Key Pillar for the Future

Perception and awareness are central to building a strong, sustainable agriculture workforce. As one of the pillars in CAHRC's National Workforce Strategic Plan, this focus ensures that students across Canada see agriculture not just as a traditional industry, but as a vibrant, innovative, and technology-driven career path.

## Building Strong Partnerships with Post-Secondary Institutions

From coast to coast, CAHRC collaborates with colleges, universities, and polytechnic schools to introduce students to the breadth of opportunities in the agriculture and agri-food sector. These relationships are not one-off interactions - they are ongoing partnerships built through regular engagement with **WIL practitioners**, including co-op coordinators, career service staff, faculty members, and program directors.

By working closely with these practitioners, CAHRC ensures that information about Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities and funding support is seamlessly integrated into career fairs, classroom presentations, info

sessions, and faculty networks. This connection helps schools strengthen their career development offerings and provide students with pathways to meaningful employment.

## The Growing Opportunities Program: Creating Real-World Experiences

At the heart of this work is CAHRC's [Growing Opportunities Program](#), which supports and funds WIL placements in agriculture and agri-food businesses. Through this program, students can bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry practice—whether in greenhouses, agri-tech companies, processing facilities, research labs, or primary production operations.

For schools, this program is a valuable resource that enhances their ability to meet WIL targets, diversify employer partnerships, and connect students with high-quality, paid experiential learning opportunities in the agriculture industry. Students gain the opportunity to discover the wide range of careers available in the agriculture industry and see firsthand that, regardless of their field of study, there's a place for them. It also allows institutions to showcase success stories that inspire future cohorts of students to explore agriculture-related careers.



## Changing Perceptions and Inspiring Career Choices

While agriculture remains a cornerstone of Canada's economy, many students still hold a narrow view of the sector. By collaborating with Post Secondary institutions across Canada, CAHRC works to expand that perception. Through industry guest speakers, job postings (PSI), student networking opportunities and tailored communications, we help students see roles in agri-business, science, sustainability, engineering, logistics, marketing, and more. This shift in awareness benefits not only students but also institutions, who can highlight agriculture as a viable and forward-looking career path for graduates from a wide range of disciplines.

## Looking Ahead: Expanding Our Reach and Impact

CAHRC's commitment to strengthening relationships with PSIs and WIL practitioners is ongoing. Our goal is to ensure that more students—regardless of their background or field of study—are introduced to the possibilities within the agriculture sector. By working together, schools and industry can help shape a skilled, innovative workforce that will meet the evolving needs of the agriculture and agri-food sector for decades to come.







# See What Jobs Are Really in Demand

**Ever wish you had a bird's-eye view  
of the agricultural job market?**

CAHRC's Job Scrapping tool pulls postings from job boards across Canada and shows:

- What positions are most in demand
- Where the labour gaps are
- Skills, salaries, and details straight from the postings

**Turn data into direction.**

Whether you're hiring or planning for the future, job scrapping gives you the insight you need to fill labour needs and strengthen your workforce.

**WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

✉ Phyllis MacCallum at [pmaccallum@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:pmaccallum@cahrc-ccrha.ca) | [www.cahrc-ccrha.ca](https://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca)



# AGRIWORKFORCE PULSE: SEPTEMBER SNAPSHOT

## Labour Market Insights from Employers Across Canadian Agriculture

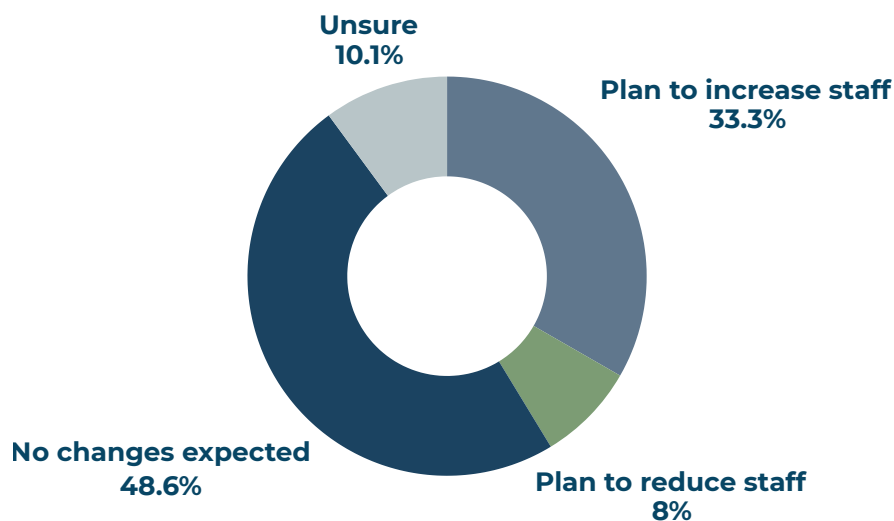
Employers across Canadian agriculture are feeling the pinch. In the past 30 days, over **42% report not having enough staff to meet current needs**. Looking ahead, optimism is mixed: one-third plan to increase staffing, yet nearly half expect no change. The toughest roles to fill? By far, **general labour and frontline positions (72%)**. These insights shine a light on ongoing gaps in our workforce — and the critical need for awareness and action.

### STAFFING SITUATION



Over 4 in 10 employers don't have the staff they need today.

### WORKFORCE EXPECTATION



### HARDEST ROLES TO FILL



Frontline and general labour jobs remain the toughest to staff — more than 7 in 10 employers report challenges filling these roles.





# PEOPLE AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

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# HOW WIL IN AGRICULTURE PREPARES STUDENTS FOR TOMORROW'S CAREERS



## A Fresh Start to the School Year

As the new school year begins, students across Canada are thinking about coursework, exams, and crucially - their next steps into the workforce. One of the most valuable ways to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application is through **Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)**.

For students, a WIL placement is more than just a job—it's a chance to gain professional experience, expand networks, and develop the skills that employers value most. When those placements happen in the agriculture and agri-food sector, the opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute to one of Canada's most vital industries are endless.

## Why Students Should Consider WIL

WIL placements provide a hands-on, practical complement to academic study. They allow students to:

- Apply classroom theory to real-world challenges
- Build transferable skills like communication, problem-solving, and project management
- Develop industry-specific technical skills
- Gain confidence in a professional environment

For agriculture specifically, WIL offers an added dimension - exposure to a diverse, innovative industry that is constantly evolving. From agri-tech and food innovation to sustainability and logistics, agriculture is a career destination for students in science, business, engineering, marketing, data analytics, and beyond.

## Exploring New Industries and Career Paths

A WIL placement in agriculture isn't just for agriculture students. Many roles in the sector require skills from disciplines outside traditional agricultural studies—skills that non-agriculture students already possess.

For example:

- **Engineering students** can apply their design and problem-solving skills to agricultural machinery or controlled environment systems
- **Business students** can gain experience in agri-business operations, supply chain management, or marketing
- **Computer science students** can work on precision agriculture technologies, data analysis, and automation
- **Environmental studies students** can support sustainability projects and resource management

By stepping into the agriculture sector, students broaden their career horizons and may discover new passions they hadn't considered before.



## Bringing Skills In, Building Skills Out

WIL is a two-way exchange. Students bring fresh perspectives, up-to-date academic knowledge, and transferable skills to employers—while employers provide mentorship, industry insights, and technical training.

For non-agriculture students, this means they leave their placement with both enhanced technical skills relevant to the sector and strengthened transferable skills such as adaptability, teamwork, and leadership. It's this blend that makes WIL alumni highly sought after in the job market.

### Start Your Search This September

The start of the academic year is the perfect time to plan ahead for a WIL placement. Opportunities are available year-round through CAHRC's **Growing Opportunities Program**, which provides wage subsidies to agriculture and agri-food employers to hire post-secondary students. Whether your background is in STEM, business, social sciences, or the arts, there's a place for your skills in Canada's agriculture sector.

**"This co-op experience has strengthened my confidence as a worker in the science field, as I got to use my lab skills directly from my college experience into my own work. I learned to build connections with my coworkers that I know are valuable to any job within all industries. I was initially nervous to partake in work regarding agriculture as I understand the importance of nutrition in everyone's life.**

**From sourcing raw materials to the final product, everything must be carefully tested and examined but with the help of my employers I have gained more trust in myself and can perform experiments independently."**

**— Anne Santiago, Red River College**

## How to Get Started

Visit CAHRC's **[Growing Opportunities Program](#)** page to learn more about available placements and funding. Talk to your school's co-op office, WIL coordinator, or career services team about exploring opportunities in the agriculture and agri-food sector this year.

### Top 5 Skills Students Develop in WIL Placements

- 1. Adaptability:** Learning to navigate new industries, technologies, and workplace cultures while solving real-world challenges.
- 2. Communication:** Building strong written, verbal, and digital communication skills through collaboration with teams, supervisors, and industry partners.
- 3. Problem-Solving:** Applying critical thinking and creative solutions to address practical issues in agriculture and agri-food operations.
- 4. Technical Expertise:** Gaining hands-on experience with industry-specific tools, technologies, and processes—often not taught in the classroom.
- 5. Teamwork & Leadership:** Developing the ability to work effectively in diverse teams, take initiative, and lead projects with confidence.





## USING CAHRC'S HR TOOLKIT TO SIMPLIFY HIRING

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As Fall progresses combines will start to slow down, the bins will be filled, across Canada, another harvest season is wrapping up. For many farm and agribusiness owners, the quieter weeks that follow bring time to reflect: What worked this year? What didn't? How can I make sure I've got the right people in place for next season?

Hiring and managing staff in agriculture can feel like a full-time job in itself. From writing job postings to navigating employment laws, onboarding seasonal workers, or planning for succession, the “people side” of the business can quickly become overwhelming. That's where **CAHRC's Agri HR Toolkit** comes in.

Think of it as your **all-in-one HR playbook**. With more than 120 ready-to-use templates, covering everything from job descriptions to interview questions to onboarding checklists, the Toolkit takes the guesswork out of building strong HR practices. Instead of starting with a blank page, you start with resources built by and for the agriculture sector.

And it's not just employers who are seeing the value. The Toolkit is also used as a **textbook in agricultural programs at some universities and colleges**, equipping the next generation of farm managers and agri-food leaders with practical, industry-specific HR skills.

Beyond the basics of hiring, the Toolkit helps you stay legally compliant with up-to-date, sector-specific guidance so you don't have to decode complicated policy alone. It also dives into long-term challenges like managing temporary foreign workers, reducing turnover, and even succession planning for family farms.

Subscribers get access to more than just templates. The Toolkit itself comes loaded with resources, sector-specific legal guidance, and best practices for hiring and managing people. On top of that, CAHRC also offers a suite of **complementary supports** to help employers go further—like the Turnover Calculator to understand retention and benchmarking tools to compare your practices with industry standards.

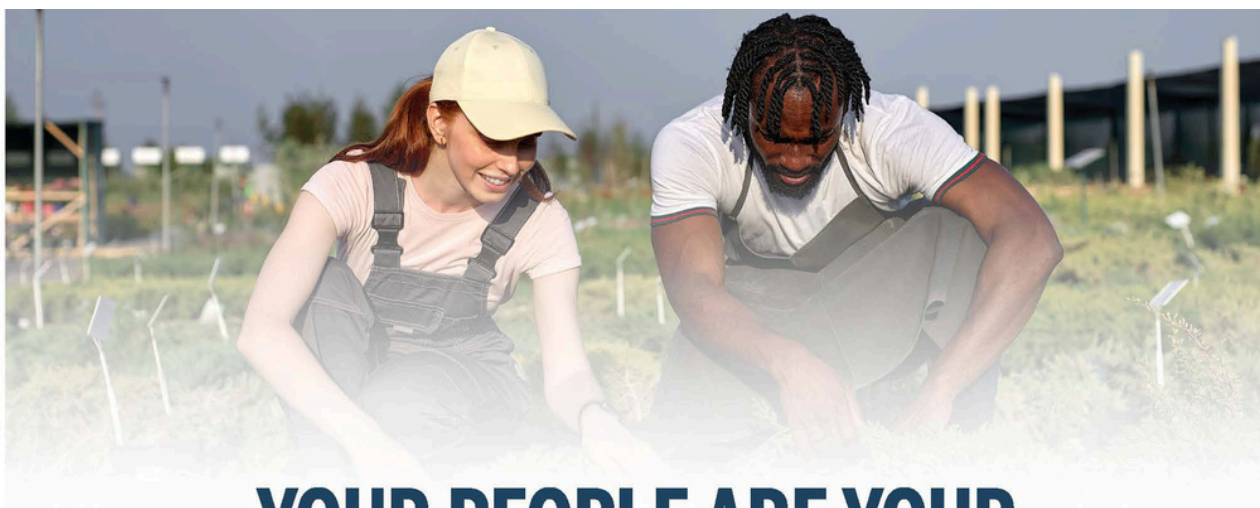


For those looking for more structured learning, CAHRC's **eLearning modules** and **microcredentials** provide a guided, step-by-step way to build HR skills. While these are separate from the Toolkit subscription, many employers use them hand-in-hand with the Toolkit to strengthen their HR confidence and capacity.

And there's more on the horizon. This fall, CAHRC is launching a **BC-specific HR Toolkit** featuring resources and case studies tailored to the unique realities of British Columbia's agribusinesses.

As you look ahead to next season, you don't have to go it alone. The Agri HR Toolkit is here to help you save time, gain confidence, and build the strong workforce your business depends on.

**Explore subscription options today at the Ag HR Toolkit page and, if you'd like a guided path, check out CAHRC's microcredentials to strengthen your HR know-how one step at a time.**



## **YOUR PEOPLE ARE YOUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE...**

**Invest in them now with the** **AgriHR Toolkit.**

This resource provides agriculture employers with industry-specific guides, legal obligations and up-to-date information on best practices to meet short-, medium- and long-term goals in:

- Recruitment, selection and hiring
- Worker performance
- Compensation and benefits
- Workforce planning
- Succession planning
- HR policies
- Health and safety
- Workplace wellness
- Diversity and inclusion
- Foreign workers

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## **Plant the seeds for tomorrow's success — access the Toolkit today.**

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Visit <https://hrtoolkit.cahrc-ccrha.ca> to learn more.



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Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council  
Conseil canadien pour les ressources humaines  
en agriculture



# Be Seen as a **Leader** in Solving Agriculture's #1 Challenge

CAHRC is the **national leader in workforce development for Canadian agriculture**. We provide research, training, and HR solutions that help the sector attract, retain, and develop a skilled, sustainable workforce. **By partnering with us, your organization plays a direct role in solving agriculture's most urgent challenge: people.**

## Why Partner with CAHRC?

- **Make an Impact:** Support programs that strengthen agriculture's workforce and HR practices.
- **Expand Your Reach:** Connect with industry leaders, professionals, and stakeholders.
- **Elevate Your Brand:** Position your organization alongside a trusted, respected non-profit in agriculture.

## Partnership Benefits



### Industry Leadership

Position your organization as a key player driving workforce excellence and innovation in the agriculture sector.



### Impactful Engagement

Support programs and initiatives that make a tangible difference in workforce development and HR management.



### Brand Visibility

Showcase your brand to a national audience of industry professionals, stakeholders, and decision-makers.



### Strategic Connections

Build meaningful relationships with researchers, policymakers, and leading agricultural organizations.

## READY TO MAKE A LASTING IMPACT?

✉ Rebecca Balsdon at [rbalsdon@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:rbalsdon@cahrc-ccrha.ca) | 🌐 [www.cahrc-ccrha.ca](http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca)





# ROOTED IN RESILIENCE: HOW NWIA EVENTS FUNDING IS TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN AGRICULTURE

Across Canada, rural women in agriculture face barriers to resources, training, and peer support. The National Women in Agriculture and Agri-Foods (NWIA) project, led by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) and funded through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's AgriDiversity Program (AAFC), is working to close that gap. Through a series of community-led events, more than 890 women in 10 provinces have come together to build networks, gain confidence, and strengthen their role in the industry.

One inspiring example comes from Newfoundland and Labrador, where Women in Agriculture NL hosted its first large-scale workshop, Rooted in Resilience.

## Building Momentum Through Support

Organizers say the early funding support was instrumental in their growth.

"The support from the NWIA project was absolutely pivotal," they shared. "It provided not just financial support, but also validation that the work we were beginning to do had national significance and was worth investing in. That encouragement gave us momentum to formally incorporate as a non-profit and launch our first large-scale workshop with confidence."

Before the Marble Mountain gathering, Women in Agriculture NL hosted smaller networking

sessions made possible through the project. These sessions laid critical groundwork, allowing women to connect, share experiences, and identify the need for a formal organization.

## Creating Space for Connection

At Rooted in Resilience, over 80 women gathered to learn from one another and build lasting networks. One of the most powerful moments came during a panel discussion where four women shared their definitions of resilience and personal stories of challenges they had overcome.

"The honesty and vulnerability in that session created a ripple effect in the room and you could see heads nodding, tears in eyes, and the recognition that 'I'm not alone.' That moment captured exactly why this work matters: when women feel seen and heard, it fuels both personal strength and collective resilience."

Participant feedback echoed this impact. Many said it was the first time they had been in a room full of women in agriculture, and they left not only with new knowledge, but also with friendships and support networks.

## Broader Community Impact

Stories like this have been repeated across the country. From machinery training days to mini-conferences and leadership programs, events



have been designed to meet local needs while advancing women's leadership. Evaluations show strong results in networking, training, collaboration with local businesses, and long-term community benefit.

As one organizer from another province put it:

"The conversations in the room started immediately and didn't finish until the last person left!"

### Looking Ahead

Women in Agriculture NL has ambitious plans to build on this momentum, expanding membership, offering mentorship, and ensuring women's perspectives are represented at both provincial and national tables.

"These spaces aren't about separating women from the industry, but about strengthening their ability to show up within it with confidence, resilience, and support."

The message from organizers is clear: investing in women strengthens the entire sector.

"The future of agriculture depends on diversity of thought, experience, and leadership and women are an essential part of that future. When women are empowered, supported, and recognized, the whole industry benefits. Resilience is not just an individual trait; it's something we build together as a community. By investing in women's leadership, we're investing in a stronger, more innovative, and more sustainable agricultural sector for everyone."

### Join the National Network

Want to be involved in the National Women in Agriculture and Agri-Foods Network?

Join our online network today and be part of our monthly webinar series, the *LeadHer Lounge*. Each month, we explore key topics like invisible work, mental health supports, women's PPE, and more.

Every third Thursday at 12:00 p.m. EDT

Women in Newfoundland and Labrador can also take the next step locally by becoming a member of **Women in Agriculture NL**. Membership details are available at [womeninagriculturenl.ca/membership](https://womeninagriculturenl.ca/membership).



**Join our online network today  
Register**

**SCAN ME!**







# IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN WORKERS





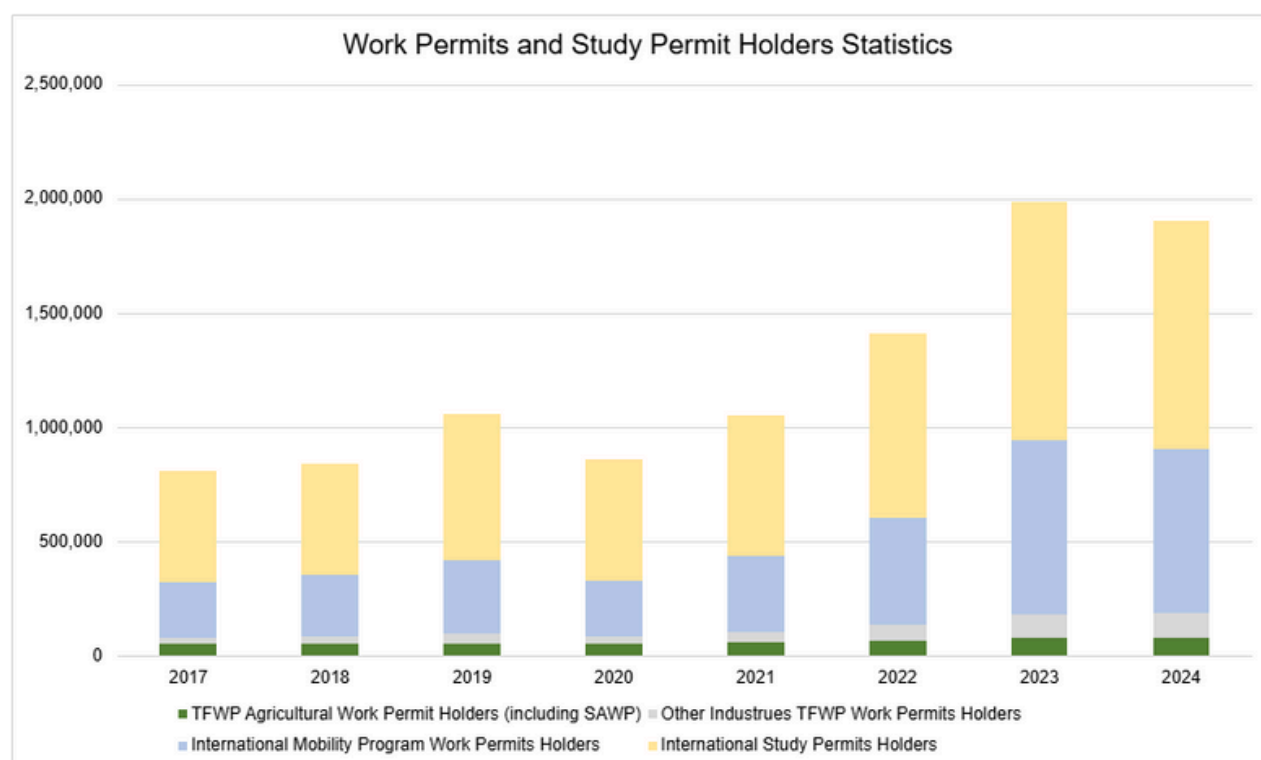
# TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM: UPDATES AND WHAT'S AHEAD FOR AGRICULTURE

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) remains an essential part of the Canadian agriculture. Whether it's fruit and vegetable farms, livestock operations, or greenhouses, the program provides the essential labour that domestic sources simply can't supply—helping farmers keep production steady and protecting Canada's food security.

From planting and harvesting crops to managing livestock and running greenhouse operations, temporary foreign workers are critical to Canada's food supply. Without them, many farms would be forced to scale down production—or shut their doors altogether.

## What Do the Numbers Say?

Agricultural workers make up only a small share of the total Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada. Their numbers have stayed relatively steady over the years, reflecting the consistent but limited need for seasonal and year-round farm labour. The largest growth in Canada's TFWs has come from the International Mobility Program (IMP) and especially international students, whose numbers have grown dramatically since 2021. It's this growth—not the agricultural stream—that is driving much of the debate and the push to bring down the overall number of temporary residents in Canada.



Source: Statistics Canada



*TFWP Agricultural Work Permit Holders (green):* Numbers in agriculture have remained relatively steady, reflecting the consistent demand for farm labour year after year. From 53,800 workers in 2017 to about 78,000 in 2024, growth has been gradual compared to other streams. These numbers include both seasonal agricultural workers and workers that work in the industry year around under the agricultural stream.

*Other Industries TFWP Work Permit Holders (grey):* These permits started at just 24,600 in 2017, more than quadrupling to 113,000 by 2024 with much sharper growth trend comparing to agriculture.

*International Mobility Program (IMP) Work Permit Holders (blue):* This stream has seen the most dramatic rise, increasing from 242,000 in 2017 to over 761,000 in 2023 before settling at 715,000 in 2024. Much of this growth came after 2021, with numbers more than doubling in just two years. IMP Work Permit Holders include individuals under postgraduate open work permits, open spousal work permits, IEC, international agreements, bridging open work permits etc.

*International Study Permit Holders (yellow):* Students make up the largest share of temporary residents, jumping from 491,000 in 2017 to more than 1.04 million in 2023, before easing slightly to 996,000 in 2024. This explosive growth far outpaces both the TFWP and IMP streams and has become a key driver of Canada's overall temporary resident population. Students are included in this diagram because typically study permit holders are allowed to work as well depending on the specific permit and enrollment status.

Overall, while agriculture's numbers remain stable and predictable, the sharp increases in other TFWP streams, the IMP, and especially study permits highlight why the national conversation has turned to reducing temporary resident levels. Agriculture, by contrast, shows a steady and ongoing reliance that reflects the sector's consistent labour needs rather than rapid expansion.

## **What Changed in 2024–2025?**

The past two years brought a wave of adjustments that employers are now navigating.

- **Shorter LMIA Validity:** Approvals now last six months instead of 12, leaving less time to bring workers in.
- **Reduced Caps:** In most sectors, only 20% of a workforce can be made up of TFWs (with agriculture exempted). For low-wage streams, that number has dropped to 10%.
- **Employment Duration:** Low-wage positions are now capped at one year, down from two.
- **Higher Wages:** High-wage positions must pay at least 20% above the provincial or territorial median.
- **Proof of Business Legitimacy:** employers must now provide direct business documentation and cannot provide an attestation letters from the lawyers and accountants to prove the business legitimacy.
- **New Stream in the Works:** Consultations wrapped up this year on a new Agriculture and Fish Processing stream, with rules on open sectoral work permits, housing, healthcare, wages, and transportation still to come.



## Advertising Returns in 2026

For agriculture, one of the biggest updates is the return of advertising requirements. Employers have until December 31, 2025, to submit LMIA applications without posting job ads, but starting January 1, 2026, proof of recruitment will once again be required. This will add extra time and planning into the hiring process.

## Job Bank's New "Direct Apply" Feature

Launched in September 2025, Job Bank's "Direct Apply" tool makes it easier for job seekers to send applications straight through the platform. For employers, this means two things: a simpler way to connect with Canadian candidates, and closer oversight from Service Canada to ensure recruitment efforts are genuine.

## What to Expect Going Forward

The message is clear: LMIAs are going to face more scrutiny. Officers will be taking a closer look at recruitment records, wages, housing, and past compliance. Employers who keep detailed documentation and plan ahead will be best positioned to succeed.

## Final Thoughts

The TFWP is changing, and it's changing quickly. Employers who want to stay ahead should:

- Get LMIA applications in before the end of 2025 to take advantage of the advertising waiver.
- Prepare now for advertising requirements coming back in 2026.
- Make use of Job Bank's Direct Apply feature to strengthen recruitment.
- Keep detailed records—compliance checks are only going to get tighter.

The road ahead may be more complex, but one thing remains true: Canadian agriculture depends on this program. The challenge now is making sure farms can adapt to the new rules while still getting the workers they need to keep our food system strong.





## TFWP SCHOOL: HIRING FOREIGN WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE



For many farm employers, navigating the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) can feel like a full-time job. The rules change often, the government portals can be confusing, and making sure you meet program and compliance requirements can quickly become overwhelming. That's exactly why [TFWP School: Hiring Foreign Workers in Agriculture](#) was created by CAHRC.

This four-week, live online program takes the guesswork out of the process. Designed specifically for the agriculture sector, it walks participants through every step, from choosing the right program stream and meeting recruitment requirements, to using the LMIA Online Portal and building a strong application. With real-world examples, document reviews, and live Q&A, the sessions are practical, interactive, and focused on helping farms avoid costly mistakes.

The first cohort of TFWP School is already underway, and [registration is open](#) for the next sessions starting **October 7, November 3, and November 19.**

Whether you're a farm owner planning ahead for the 2026 season, an HR or admin professional managing foreign workers, or simply an employer who wants to understand the process instead of relying on a consultant, this program is built for you.

Along the way, you'll have access to agriculture-specific expertise in TFWP and immigration with years of experience, ongoing support, and answers to your own questions between the sessions and even the opportunity to refine and submit your LMIA application if you're ready. At \$2,500, TFWP School is an investment in confidence, compliance, and keeping your farm running smoothly.





**Do you have a story that  
needs to be told in the next  
issue of Agri Workforce  
Matters?**

**LET US KNOW!**

**Our team can be reached at [outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:outreach@cahrc-ccrha.ca)  
to discuss sponsored content and other opportunities  
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## SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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# BUILDING A UNIFIED SKILLS LANDSCAPE

## Exploring Agriculture and Food Processing Competency Frameworks for Greater Sector Impact

When we talk about Canada's agri-food sector, we often separate it into two distinct worlds: what happens on the farm, and what happens in a processing facility. Yet the labour needs, skill sets, and talent pipelines that support these two pillars are more connected than we realize.

Behind every apple harvested and every steak packaged, there is a shared backbone of essential skills—like teamwork, safety awareness, problem-solving, and technical know-how. But despite this interconnectedness, the systems we use to define and track those skills have largely been developed in isolation.

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) has taken an important step in mapping the skills required across primary agriculture, from general labourers to farm managers and technical specialists. Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC) has built a robust competency framework for the food and beverage processing sector, capturing over 400 skills across diverse roles.

As these two frameworks mature, there is growing interest in exploring how they

can better complement one another. By fostering a more connected understanding of skills across the agri-food chain, we can help open new pathways for workers, better inform policy decisions, and strengthen the sector's resilience as a whole.

## Where the Frameworks Meet

CAHRC's Skills Framework organizes roles in primary agriculture by functional areas and proficiency levels—from labourer through to executive and categorizes skills into five key types:

- Core personal effectiveness skills
- Core industry technical skills
- Functional area-specific skills
- Leadership skills
- Sub-sector or occupation-specific skills

Each skill is defined with a performance profile that includes expected behaviours and relevant knowledge, all tailored to levels of complexity and responsibility.

Similarly, FPSC's Food Skills Library captures over 400 competencies grouped by job function (e.g., production, HR, marketing). FPSC also uses performance indicators and complexity levels (from operational to executive) and maps learning pathways across occupations. Their model is already tied to credentialing and curriculum, and it's used widely by employers and training providers.



What both frameworks reveal is a shared language of skills: attention to detail, health and safety, regulatory compliance, communication, and digital literacy appear across roles and sectors. These cross-cutting competencies form the glue that binds the industry together—and they present a clear opportunity for greater alignment in the future.

### Why a Connected Approach Matters

A more coordinated approach to skills frameworks offers several benefits:

- **Career Mobility:** Workers can more easily transition between agriculture and food processing roles if the skill requirements are framed consistently. That means better retention, more transferable training, and increased workforce flexibility.
- **Smarter Training and Education:** Greater coordination helps educators develop training programs that reflect real-world demands across the value chain, reducing duplication and ensuring students are job-ready.
- **Policy and Planning:** With more consistent data and definitions across sectors, governments and industry organizations can make more informed decisions about immigration pathways, technology investments, and workforce funding priorities.

In short, aligning these frameworks provides the foundation for a modern, mobile, and resilient agri-food workforce.

### Looking Ahead

The question now isn't if these frameworks should be aligned—it's how soon we can make it happen.

Imagine the potential of a coordinated skills ecosystem. Employers could more easily recruit from across the agri-food spectrum, knowing that the language of skills and competencies is consistent. Educators could build programs that support a full farm-to-fork career path.

Policymakers could access a clearer picture of workforce trends and respond with targeted investments.

Even small steps—like mapping shared competencies, developing a joint glossary, or offering stackable microcredentials—could have a big impact. And as labour challenges intensify and automation reshapes job roles, having a unified, sector-wide skills framework isn't just a “nice to have.” It's a competitive advantage for Canada's food system.







# AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

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# SEEDING DIGITAL SKILLS: GIVING AGRI-FOOD BUSINESSES A COMPETITIVE EDGE

The agriculture sector is changing fast. New challenges in climate, trade, and market competitiveness mean farmers and food processors need the right tools to stay ahead. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's [Seeding Digital Skills](#) program is stepping in to provide just that, a chance to gain hands-on experience with digital twinning, an emerging technology that has already transformed industries from manufacturing to medicine, and is now poised to do the same for Canadian agriculture.

*"Digital twinning is the way of the future, and our farmers need to be given access to the tools to keep them competitive and profitable," says the team from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC). "With the climate and trade challenges we face, predictive tools that support and inform decisions are a must."*

## Why Digital Skills Matter Now

Digital adoption isn't just about keeping up, it's about future-proofing Ontario's

agri-food businesses. As OCC explains, digital twinning allows farmers to simulate and predict outcomes, giving them critical insights for smarter, more profitable decisions. While European farmers are already adopting this technology, Canadian agriculture has a chance to leap forward and programs like Seeding Digital Skills make that possible.

## Strong Reception from the Ag Sector

The response so far has been overwhelmingly positive. Both business owners and industry associations see the clear value in gaining access to predictive digital tools. Participants in the training have appreciated the practical approach, ongoing support from trainers, and the ability to immediately apply what they're learning to their operations.

*"People recognize the need for programs and technology that help our farmers stay ahead of the curve," OCC notes. "Participants who have embarked on the Seeding Digital Skills journey have appreciated the support given by the trainers leading the sessions."*



## What Makes Seeding Digital Skills Unique

There's virtually no downside to participating. Over just 12 weeks, with three hours of class time per week, businesses gain access to cutting-edge training, flexible scheduling options, and a one-year license for Unity Engine, a platform to support digital twin development after completion. This license unlocks hundreds of hours of continued learning, giving participants the chance to keep building their digital skills at their own pace.

Even better, employers who send employees to the program may be eligible for stipends of up to **\$2,000 per participant**. All told, the package is valued at **\$15,000 but it's available entirely free of charge**.

## Building a Future-Ready Agri-Food Sector

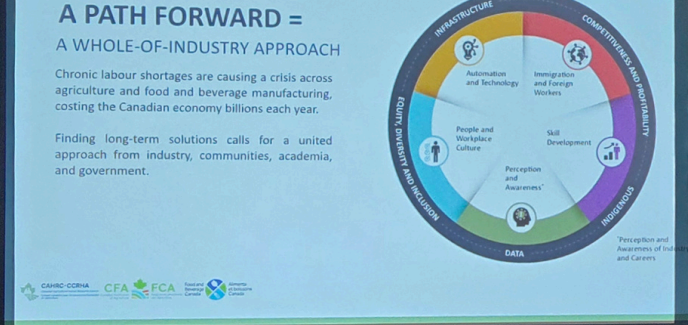
The OCC's goal is clear: to seed the development of digital skills and technology adoption across Ontario's agriculture sector, creating a foundation for long-term profitability and sustainability. With the support of trusted partners like CAHRC, the program is tailored to meet the real needs of farmers and food processors and to reach those who can benefit most.

## Why Join Now

The future of farming is digital and this program ensures Ontario's agriculture sector won't be left behind. Whether you're running a small family farm or a large food processing operation, Seeding Digital Skills gives you the tools, training, and support you need to stay competitive. Spaces are limited, and the opportunity is free. The only question is: can you afford not to join?







# AROUND TOWN

We've got our fingers on the pulse of all events in Canadian agriculture, so you don't have to.

Find CAHRC here:

- **UOFGUELPH FOOD AND AG JOB FAIR, OCT 1**
- **FSC A FUTURE BUILT ON SKILLS, OCT 15**
- **ONTARIO HATCHERY INFORMATION DAY, OCT 22**

Other events:

- **WORLD DAIRY EXPO, SEP 30-OCT 3**
- **CASA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, OCT 6-9**
- **FOOD LEADERSHIP SUMMIT, OCT 7-8**
- **NL YOUNG FARMERS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT, OCT 17-18**
- **AGRICULTURE ENLIGHTENED, OCT 23**
- **SYMPOSIUM SUR LES BOVINS LAITIERS 2025, OCT 29**
- **EXTENSION 4.0: DISRUPTION AND TRANSFORMATION IN AGRI-FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, OCT 29-31**
- **THE CONVERSATION NAAAN CONNECT, NOV 5**
- **INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURE SUMMIT, NOV 27-28**



**CAHRC**  
Canadian Agricultural  
Human Resource Council



**CCRHA**  
Conseil canadien pour  
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en agriculture

**[WWW.CAHRC-CCRHA.CA](http://WWW.CAHRC-CCRHA.CA)**