

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

AGRI WORKFORCE MATTERS

MARCH 2026

ONBOARDING INTERNATIONAL SEASONAL WORKERS

AGRITOURISM IN CANADA: CONNECTING FARMS AND COMMUNITIES

HIRING WORKERS WITH NO AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND

BRINGING STUDENT TALENT INTO AGRICULTURE THIS SUMMER

CONNECTING TALENT TO OPPORTUNITY



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.

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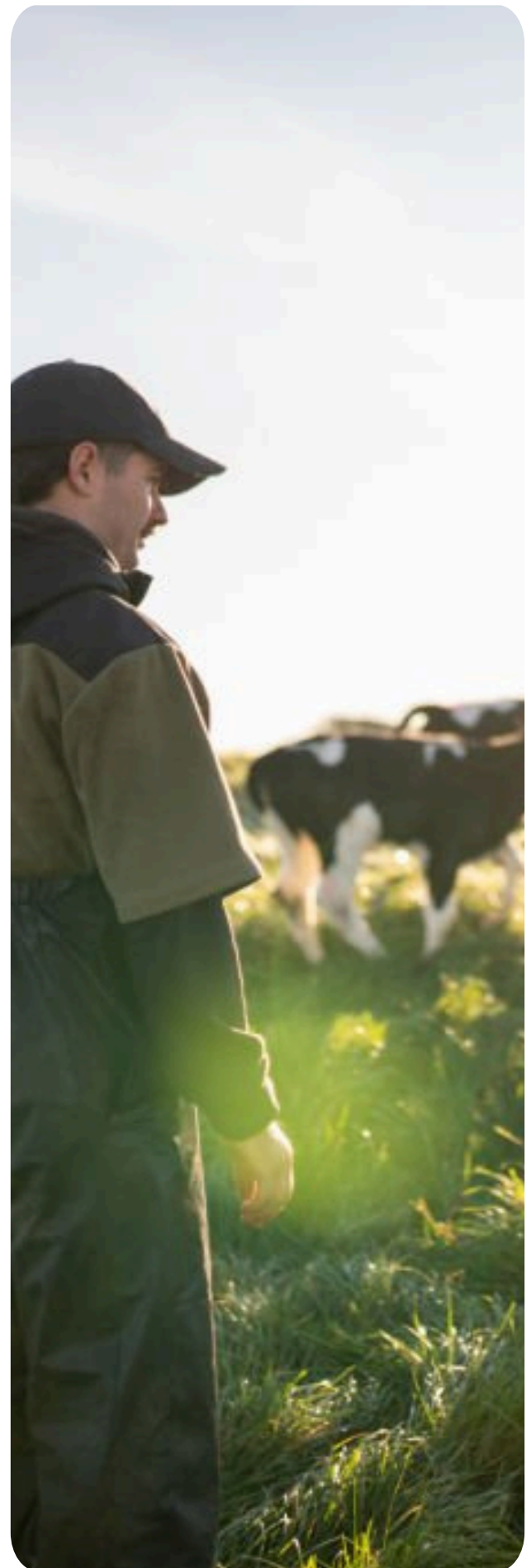
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To learn more about the issues and CAHRC's plan to address them, [click here](#).

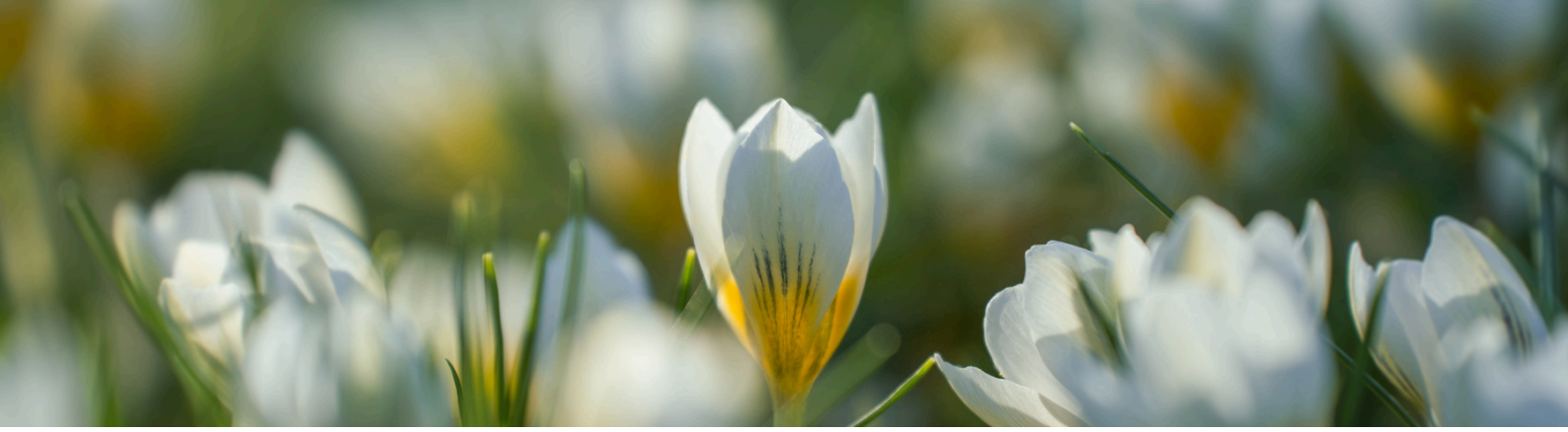
Due to reduced funding capacity to produce this publication, this issue of Agri Workforce Matters is available in English only.



GET INVOLVED:
A STRONG WORKFORCE
STARTS WITH YOU.

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Dear readers,

Spring 2026 is fast approaching. Across Canada, it may still feel like winter is lingering longer than we'd like—but we know that change is just ahead. Soon, temperatures will rise, the snow will recede, and the first signs of growth will return to fields and farms across the country.

While we wait for the season to turn, producers are already hard at work planning for the months ahead. Going into any new season there are always uncontrollable uncertainties to consider and this season has not shortage of potential impacts. From geopolitical issues including tariffs and the price of fertilizer and energy to climate impacts such as drought or flooding, it is difficult to prepare for what may come in the season ahead. But there is one thing you can control – planning to make sure you have the right workforce in place to support your business.

At the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), we are here to support employers every step of the way. Our [Agri HR Toolkit](#) provides practical resources to guide workforce planning, recruitment, and retention. For those seeking additional support, we offer one-on-one advisory services, training, and e-learning opportunities tailored to the unique needs of agriculture employers. Through the [Growing Opportunities](#) program, employers can also access wage subsidies to offset the cost of hiring post-secondary students, while our partnerships with employment service organizations help connect employers with a broader and more diverse talent pool.

This spring also marks an important period of growth and innovation for CAHRC. We are launching a new five-year initiative to expand

our labour market information and skills research. This work will focus on developing more timely, data-driven insights into labour supply and demand, while tracking emerging skills needs—particularly as automation, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies continue to reshape jobs across the sector.

In addition, we are looking forward to bringing industry leaders together on June 10–11 in Calgary for the [National Workforce Strategic Plan \(NWSP\) Summit](#). This event will serve as the first in a series of annual gatherings designed to advance the NWSP, strengthen collaboration across the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing value chain, and ensure our sector is equipped with the workforce it needs—now and into the future.

Spring is a season of renewal and momentum. At CAHRC, we are energized by the opportunities ahead—not only to support the immediate workforce needs of the industry, but also to drive forward new initiatives that strengthen our collective capacity for the long term.

This edition of our e-magazine highlights some resources to support the focus of hiring for the new season ahead, as well as some great insights on other initiatives that help support the industry attracting and retaining the workforce we need now and in the future.



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



ABOUT CAHRC

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:

- Ag focused up-to-date HR training
- Wage subsidy and skill development programs
- Industry networking opportunities
- 1:1 HR consulting
- 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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A man wearing a dark jacket, a cap, and glasses is looking down at a piece of machinery in a factory or industrial setting. The background shows various pipes, wires, and equipment.

CAHRC'S CORNER

- **STAYING CONNECTED**
- **CONNECTING TALENT TO OPPORTUNITY: CAHRC AND ACCES EMPLOYMENT WORKING TOGETHER**

CAHRC'S CORNER

STAYING CONNECTED



The NWSP is entering its next phase, focused on action and collaboration.

Workforce shortages, technology, and competition for talent are reshaping the sector.

Join leaders from across Canada at the **NWSP Workforce Summit 2026** in Calgary, AB on June 10 and 11.

REGISTER NOW



If hiring foreign workers is part of your plan, this matters.

Join the interest list now.

We show you exactly how to prepare a strong, compliant LMIA.

Step by step. No gaps. No guesswork. With templates, guidance, and real-time support.

So you can move forward with confidence and results.

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

What Employers Need to Know

- ✓ **Wage Subsidy:** Up to 50% of wages, Up to \$5,000 per student
- ✓ **Eligible Placements:** Co-op | Internships | Field placements | Applied projects
- ✓ **Updated Program Details:** Review latest eligibility and requirements

<https://cahrc-ccrha.poweredbymagnet.ca>

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 to learn more.



CAHRC'S CORNER

CONNECTING TALENT TO OPPORTUNITY: CAHRC AND ACCES EMPLOYMENT WORKING TOGETHER

Canada's agriculture sector is changing quickly. With the rise of automation, precision agriculture, and controlled environment systems, the demand for skilled talent, especially in AgTech, is only growing. At the same time, many internationally trained professionals arrive in Canada with strong experience and education but often struggle to find a way into the agriculture industry.

Collaboration between the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) and [ACCES Employment](#) has helped to bridge that gap, connecting employers with job-ready talent while supporting newcomers as they build careers in agriculture.

ACCES Employment is a Canadian non-profit that has been doing this work for years, helping jobseekers from diverse backgrounds, including newcomers, find their footing in the labour market. Through targeted training programs, employment services, and strong employer connections,

ACCES plays an important role in linking skilled talent with real opportunities, including in agriculture and AgTech.

This partnership supported the [ACCES Connecting to Careers in Agricultural Technology within Vertical Farming program](#), funded by Upskill Canada (powered by Palette Skills) and the Government of Canada. The program is designed to prepare internationally trained professionals for careers in Canada's growing AgTech and controlled environment agriculture sectors—giving them not just technical knowledge, but also a better understanding of how the Canadian workplace operates.

Connecting New Canadians with the Agriculture Industry

One of the biggest challenges for newcomers isn't skills, it's access. Access to employers, to networks, and to a better understanding of the industry.

Through this collaboration, CAHRC has helped turn training into opportunities by:

- Hosting ACCES led industry networking and speed mentoring sessions
- Promoting program graduates to employers across Canada
- Supporting sector orientation through CAHRC's [Welcome to Canadian Agriculture! eLearning program](#).

These activities may seem simple, but they make a big difference. They create space for real conversations, help build confidence, and open doors that might otherwise stay closed.





“Through our Connecting to Careers in Agricultural Technology program, we’re helping internationally trained professionals translate their skills into meaningful careers in these high-growth sectors while supporting employers with access to diverse, job-ready talent”. says Allison Pond, President and CEO of ACCES Employment, “Partnerships like this one with CAHRC are essential to turning training into real opportunity and building a more resilient, inclusive agricultural workforce.”

The impact is already clear in the feedback from participants. Beyond technical skills, they are gaining something just as important—insight and connection:

“It was great getting industry perspective from HR to recruiters’ perspectives.”

“The mentoring session yesterday was exceptional. The insights shared were extremely valuable, and I would highly recommend organizing more sessions like this in the future.”

“I appreciate the hard work, help and support.”

These reflections are a good reminder that workforce development isn’t just about training—it’s about people. It’s about helping individuals understand the industry, feel confident navigating it, and see a place for themselves within it.

At its core, this collaboration reflects a shared goal: strengthening Canada’s agricultural workforce in a way that is practical, inclusive, and forward-looking.

For employers, it means access to a new and often untapped talent pool. For newcomers, it creates a clearer pathway into the industry. And for the sector as a whole, it’s a step toward a more resilient and sustainable workforce.

Sometimes, the most effective solutions are also the simplest—bringing the right people together at the right time.

For more information about ACCES and their programs visit acesemployment.ca.





**PERCEPTION AND
AWARENESS OF
INDUSTRY AND CAREERS**



HIRING WORKERS WITH NO AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND: TURNING POTENTIAL INTO GROWTH



For many farm employers, finding workers has become one of the most pressing challenges in running a successful operation.

According to the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), labour shortages remain a persistent issue across the sector. CAHRC's [labour market research](#) found that more than 28,000 agricultural jobs went unfilled during peak season contributing to an estimated \$3.5 billion in lost sales for Canadian farms. These numbers highlight a reality many employers already experience firsthand: there simply are not enough experienced agricultural workers available to meet the industry's needs.

At the same time, agriculture is competing for workers with other industries that often offer higher wages or more predictable work schedules. Sectors such as manufacturing, mining, transportation, construction, and oil and gas actively recruit from the same rural labour pools that farms rely on. For many workers, these industries may appear more attractive because of higher starting wages, structured shifts, or perceived job stability.

Because of this, many farm businesses are beginning to rethink their hiring strategies. Increasingly, employers are finding success by hiring people who do not come from agricultural backgrounds and helping them

develop the skills needed for the job.

While this approach may seem like a risk at first, many employers are discovering that bringing in workers from outside the sector can strengthen their team and introduce new perspectives and skills.

Expanding the Talent Pool

Historically, many farms preferred to hire individuals who had grown up on farms or who already had experience in agriculture. While experience can certainly be helpful, limiting hiring to this group significantly reduces the number of available candidates.

CAHRC's labour market analysis shows that many agricultural employers struggle to fill positions even after actively recruiting, reflecting a broader workforce shortage across the sector. As Canada's agricultural workforce continues to age and fewer young people enter farming careers, the challenge is expected to continue.

Opening recruitment to people from other industries can make a significant difference. Workers from sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, retail, and hospitality often bring valuable transferable skills that can translate well to farm work.

For example, someone who has operated equipment in construction may adapt quickly to farm machinery. Workers from manufacturing environments often bring strong attention to safety procedures and efficiency. Employees from customer-focused industries such as retail or hospitality may bring strong teamwork and communication skills that are valuable in farm operations.

By looking beyond traditional agricultural experience, employers can significantly expand their hiring pool.

Agriculture Must Compete Differently

While farms may not always be able to match the wages offered by industries like mining or oil and gas, agriculture has other strengths that can be attractive to workers, especially when employers highlight them during recruitment.

For many employees, **quality of life and work environment matter just as much as wages.**

Farm employers can emphasize the unique benefits of working in agriculture, including:

- Working outdoors and close to nature
- Being part of a small, close-knit team
- Living and working in rural communities
- Having a direct connection to food production and meaningful work.

Unlike many industrial jobs, farm work often provides opportunities for employees to see the direct impact of their work on the success of the operation. This sense of purpose can be highly motivating for many workers.

Another advantage agriculture can offer is seasonal flexibility. Many farms experience intense work periods during planting and harvest, but quieter periods during the off-season. In some cases, this can allow employees to take extended time off, pursue training, travel, or take on other seasonal work.

Highlighting these lifestyle advantages can help farms attract workers who may not initially consider agriculture as a career.



Hiring for Attitude and Work Ethic

Many experienced farm managers will say that the most important qualities in a good employee are not necessarily technical skills, but **attitude, reliability, and willingness to learn.**

Farm work requires dedication, adaptability, and often long hours during busy seasons. These traits can be far more important than previous experience with crops, livestock, or equipment.

When hiring workers without agricultural backgrounds, employers often focus on candidates who demonstrate:

- A strong work ethic
- Reliability and punctuality
- A willingness to learn new skills
- The ability to work as part of a team
- A positive attitude toward physical and outdoor work.

Technical skills can be taught. Motivation and reliability are much harder to train.

During the interview process, employers can ask questions that help identify these qualities. Asking candidates to describe situations where they had to learn a new skill quickly or work in physically demanding conditions can help reveal whether they are likely to adapt well to the farm environment.

The Importance of Onboarding

For employees who are new to agriculture, the first few weeks on the job are particularly important. Without clear guidance, new workers may feel overwhelmed by unfamiliar equipment, terminology, and work routines.

A simple and structured onboarding process can make a significant difference in helping employees settle into their roles.

This may include:

- Providing an orientation on the first day
- Explaining the overall workflow of the farm
- Reviewing safety procedures and equipment use



- Introducing the employee to key team members
- Pairing the new hire with an experienced worker during the first few weeks.

These small steps help employees feel more comfortable and reduce the learning curve.

Training Builds Confidence and Skills

Training is especially important when hiring workers who have no previous agricultural experience. Fortunately, effective training does not need to be complicated.

Many farms find success using a straightforward approach that includes demonstration, supervised practice, and feedback. Showing employees how a task is performed, allowing them to practice under supervision, and providing constructive feedback helps them learn faster and build confidence.

Some employers also develop simple written instructions or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for common tasks. These guides help new workers understand expectations and ensure that work is done consistently across the operation.

Training also signals to employees that the employer is invested in their success. This can improve engagement and retention.

Fresh Perspectives Can Strengthen Operations

Hiring workers from outside agriculture can also bring unexpected benefits. Employees who have worked in other industries may introduce new ideas or approaches to problem-solving. Some farms have improved safety procedures, workflow organization, or record-keeping practices based on suggestions from workers who previously worked in manufacturing, logistics, or other sectors.

Different experiences can lead to new ways of thinking about farm operations and can support innovation and efficiency.

Looking Ahead

For many farm employers, hiring workers without agricultural backgrounds is becoming an important strategy for building a sustainable workforce.

With the right approach—focusing on transferable skills, providing strong onboarding and training, and promoting the lifestyle and community advantages of farm work—agricultural employers can successfully turn motivated individuals into skilled members of their team. In a tight labour market, the most valuable quality in a new hire may not be agricultural experience, but the willingness to learn and contribute to the success of the farm.





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 pmacallum@cahrc-ccrha.ca | www.cahrc-ccrha.ca



PEOPLE AND WORKPLACE CULTURE



AGRITOURISM IN CANADA: CONNECTING FARMS AND COMMUNITIES



Agritourism has become one of the most dynamic areas of diversification within Canadian agriculture. At its core, agritourism invites the public onto farms and into rural spaces to experience agriculture firsthand, whether through farm markets, pick-your-own operations, festivals, culinary experiences, educational tours, or on-farm accommodations.

Across provinces such as Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, and Ontario, agritourism has evolved beyond seasonal corn mazes and pumpkin patches into a sophisticated blend of agriculture, hospitality, and storytelling. Wineries, cideries, maple syrup producers, livestock farms, and market gardens are increasingly building branded visitor experiences that highlight local food, rural heritage, and environmental stewardship.

Several Factors are Driving This Growth.

Consumers are more interested than ever in knowing where their food comes from. Farm-to-table dining, experiential travel, and support for local businesses have all contributed to stronger demand for authentic rural experiences. At the same time, farm operators are looking for ways to diversify revenue streams in response to

market volatility, labour shortages, and rising input costs. Agritourism offers a way to generate supplementary income while strengthening direct relationships with customers.

The economic impact extends beyond the farm gate. Agritourism supports rural economies by increasing demand for local accommodations, restaurants, artisans, and service providers. It also helps build social licence by improving public understanding of modern farming practices. Visitors who walk through a dairy barn, orchard, or greenhouse leave with a more informed perspective on food production and the realities of agricultural business.

However, agritourism is not without its challenges. Regulatory frameworks, insurance requirements, zoning restrictions, and health and safety standards vary across provinces and municipalities. Operators must balance visitor experience with biosecurity, liability management, and core farm operations. Infrastructure investments—parking, washrooms, signage, and accessibility, can also be significant.

Looking ahead, agritourism in Canada is expected to continue growing as rural communities leverage their unique assets. Technology is playing a larger role, from online booking systems and digital marketing to interactive farm education tools. Strategic partnerships between tourism boards, municipalities, and agricultural organizations will be key to unlocking further potential.

At a high level, agritourism represents more than diversification; it is a bridge between urban and rural Canada. By opening their gates, farmers are not only generating revenue, they are shaping public perception, strengthening rural resilience, and celebrating Canadian agriculture in a tangible, memorable way.





IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN WORKERS





ONBOARDING INTERNATIONAL SEASONAL WORKERS: SETTING THE STAGE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

Each spring, farms across Canada prepare for the arrival of international seasonal agricultural workers who play a critical role in planting, greenhouse production, harvesting, and overall farm operations. According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), over 33,000 work permits were issued under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), highlighting the significant role international seasonal workers play in supporting Canadian agriculture.

While employers often breathe a sigh of relief once LMIA paperwork and work permits are approved, this is only the beginning. A successful season depends heavily on how well workers are welcomed, oriented, and supported. For many seasonal workers, this may be their first time in Canada, their first exposure to Canadian workplaces, and often their first experience living and working outside of their home country. A structured onboarding process helps reduce stress, improves retention, and supports compliance with Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) requirements.

Start Before They Arrive: The Importance of Pre-Boarding

Effective onboarding begins well before workers land in Canada. Pre-boarding helps reduce anxiety, manage expectations, and build trust — especially for workers arriving for the first time. Many employers create a group chat, commonly using WhatsApp, to connect with incoming workers ahead of arrival. This simple step helps workers feel welcome and provides a direct communication channel. Through the group chat, employers can share:

- Short video greeting from the farm manager or owner
- Introduction to the farm and team
- Photos of the farm and accommodation
- Location details and nearby town
- Weather expectations for spring arrivals
- Suggestions on personal items to bring
- What is provided in the accommodation
- Transportation arrangements from the airport
- Who will meet workers upon arrival
- What to expect on the first day
- Overview of the first week.

This early communication sets the tone. Workers arrive feeling prepared rather than uncertain, which helps them transition more smoothly.

Accommodation: Setting Expectations Early

Housing is often one of the biggest adjustments for seasonal workers. Clear expectations help avoid misunderstandings and create a respectful shared living environment.

During onboarding, employers should review:

- House rules and expectations
- Quiet hours
- Visitor policies
- Shared space etiquette
- Laundry arrangements
- Internet use guidelines
- Smoking policies (if applicable)
- Maintenance reporting procedures.

Cleaning expectations should also be clearly defined. Some farms create a rotating cleaning schedule, while others arrange periodic professional cleaning. Regardless of the approach, clarity is essential.

Providing written accommodation guidelines — ideally translated into the workers' language — helps reinforce expectations and supports compliance.

First Impressions Matter: Arrival and the First Week

The first 24 to 48 hours shape workers' perception of the employer. Small gestures go a long way. Many employers:

- Meet workers at the airport
- Provide welcome kits
- Offer refreshments upon arrival
- Allow time to rest after travel
- Provide basic groceries for the first few days
- Take workers grocery shopping
- Provide a tour of the farm and accommodation
- Introduce supervisors and coworkers.

Taking workers grocery shopping within the first day or two is especially important. Workers often arrive with limited food, unfamiliarity with local stores, and no transportation.

The first week should focus on gradual integration rather than immediate productivity. Allowing time for orientation, paperwork, training, and adjustment leads to better performance.

Farm Orientation: Building Connection

A structured farm orientation helps workers understand their role and the bigger picture. This builds engagement and pride in their work.

Orientation should include:

- History of the farm
- Overview of operations
- Introduction to managers and owners
- Organizational structure
- Production goals for the season
- Work schedules and expectations
- Communication channels
- Break times and rest periods
- Payroll information
- Workplace policies.

When owners or senior managers personally greet new employees, it sends a powerful message that workers are valued members of the team.

Language Matters: Translate Key Documents

Clear communication is essential, especially when workers speak different languages. Translating key documents reduces confusion and improves compliance. Employers should consider translating:

- Employee handbook
- Health and safety procedures
- Emergency contacts
- Accommodation rules
- Workplace policies
- Complaint procedures
- Training materials.



Paperwork and Compliance Requirements

Onboarding international seasonal workers also includes important administrative steps. Completing paperwork early ensures compliance and avoids delays. This may include but not limited to the following:

- Work permit verification
- Social Insurance Number (SIN) support
- Health insurance registration
- Payroll forms
- Authorizations for payroll deductions forms
- Emergency contact information
- Employment agreement review
- Housing acknowledgement forms
- Health and safety acknowledgement
- Policy sign-offs.

Providing assistance with SIN applications or directing workers to Service Canada locations can help streamline the process.

Providing Workers with Information About Their Rights

Employers must provide workers with [information about their rights in Canada](#) on or before the first day of work and ensure it remains accessible throughout employment. This information should:

- Be visible in common areas such as bulletin board in the rest area or coffee-room
- Be available electronically or in print. If the information is provided electronically, employers must ensure workers have access to internet, printer and know how to use it
- Be provided in English or French

- Ideally be available in the worker's preferred language
- Be re-shared each season for returning workers.

Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing

Seasonal workers often face unique challenges — separation from family, cultural adjustment, language barriers, and rural isolation. Supporting mental health is an important part of onboarding.

Employers can:

- Encourage open communication
- Create a welcoming environment
- Provide Wi-Fi access to connect with family
- Organize occasional social activities
- Offer transportation to town
- Provide information about local services
- Check in regularly with workers.

Even small actions, such as introducing workers to each other can help build community and reduce isolation.

A Strong Start Leads to a Strong Season

Onboarding international seasonal workers is more than a checklist — it is an investment in productivity, retention, and workplace culture. When workers feel welcomed, prepared, and supported, they integrate faster, perform better, and are more likely to return in future seasons.

With thoughtful pre-boarding, clear expectations, structured training, and attention to wellbeing, farms can set the foundation for a successful season — starting the moment workers begin their journey to Canada.



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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

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**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 info@cahrc-ccrha.ca to
discuss sponsored content and other opportunities you
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SKILL DEVELOPMENT



GROWING OPPORTUNITIES: BRINGING STUDENT TALENT INTO AGRICULTURE THIS SUMMER

As the agriculture and agri-food sector continues to evolve, building a strong talent pipeline has never been more important. For employers planning ahead for Summer 2026, welcoming students through Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) placements can be one of the most effective ways to strengthen operations while investing in the future of the sector.

Programs like [CAHRC's Growing Opportunities Student Work Placement Program \(SWPP\)](#), help employers connect with students and access funding to support meaningful work placements.

Across Canada, students studying fields such as STEM, environmental science, business, communications, engineering, ag-tech, biology, GIS, and data analytics are eager to gain real-world experience. For many, these placements offer their first exposure to the breadth of opportunities available within agriculture.

By opening your workplace to students, you're not only filling a seasonal role...you're helping introduce emerging talent to an industry that needs their ideas, skills, and enthusiasm.

Why Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities Benefits Employers

Work-Integrated Learning provides more than short-term support during busy

seasons. It offers employers an opportunity to strengthen their workforce strategy while supporting the development of future industry professionals.

Employers who hire students benefit from:

- Developing future talent pipelines by identifying and mentoring potential long-term employees
- Bringing new perspectives into their operations, particularly in areas like technology, digital tools, and data
- Supporting the agriculture sector's long-term growth by helping students gain meaningful agricultural experience.

Finding Students for Summer 2026 Placements

Summer will be here in no time! Employers looking to hire for the summer can consider several effective pathways to connect with potential candidates:

1. Connect with post-secondary career and co-op offices

Many colleges and universities have dedicated teams that help match students with employers seeking summer placements. These offices can promote job opportunities directly to students enrolled in relevant programs.

2. Engage with WIL networks and sector partners

Organizations like CAHRC collaborate with

national Work-Integrated Learning networks and career services teams across Canada, like [CEWIL Canada](#). These partnerships help employers reach students interested in gaining experience in agriculture and agri-food.

3. Share opportunities through student-focused platforms

Posting roles on platforms commonly used by students (such as LinkedIn, university and college job portals, and sector-specific boards) can help increase visibility and attract strong applicants.

4. Design roles that offer meaningful learning experiences

Students are often drawn to positions where they can contribute to real projects and develop new skills. Roles that combine hands-on work with elements of innovation, sustainability, or technology can be particularly appealing.

Investing in the Next Generation of Agriculture

Each student placement offers an opportunity to strengthen both your organization and the broader agriculture sector. By providing experience and mentorship, employers play a vital role in shaping the next generation of agricultural professionals.

These experiences can help students better understand the diversity of careers available in agriculture while giving employers access to motivated individuals eager to contribute and learn.



Looking Ahead to Summer 2026

Employers interested in hiring students through the **Growing Opportunities Program** will soon be able to apply for funding. Applications are set to open **April 1, 2026**.

In the meantime, employers may wish to begin considering potential roles and connecting with post-secondary institutions to ensure they are well positioned to welcome student talent this summer.

Changes to Growing Opportunities starting April 1, 2026:

- The opportunity must align with the student's post-secondary program instead of being validated by the post-secondary institution. (Confirmation of WIL form is no longer required)
- Wage subsidy is now up to 50% or \$5,000 for all students. Applications can be submitted through Outcome Campus Connect on April 1: <https://cahrc-ccrha.poweredbymagnet.ca/> Contact mlockhart@cahrc-ccrha.ca for any questions.



Interested in Hosting a Biotechnology Intern?

The University of British Columbia's Master of Biotechnology (MBtec) program is seeking industry partners, across Canada, to host internships beginning in September and/or January.

The MBtec is an intensive, 16-month professional master's program, located in the Okanagan, and is focused on hands-on, specialized laboratory training and industry-ready professional skills.

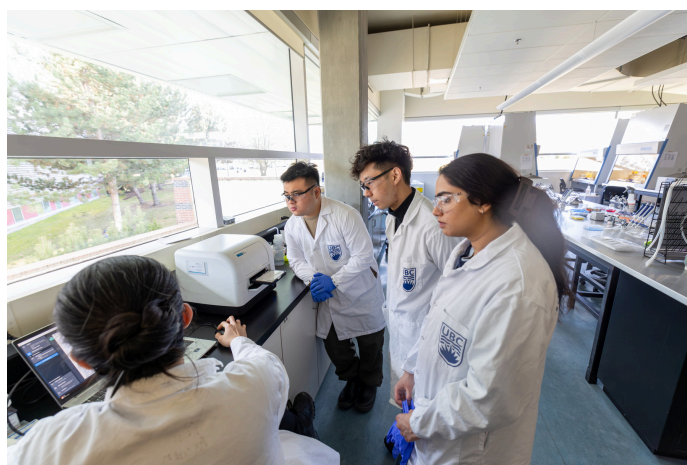
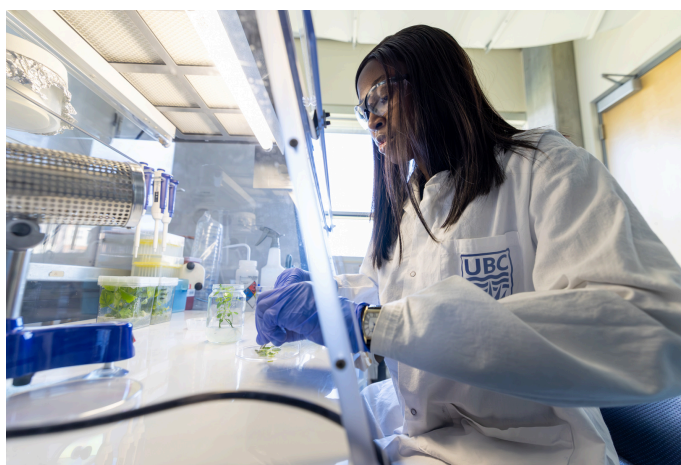
Why host an MBtec intern?

- Gain early access to top-tier talent
- Interns are trained in key techniques, including:
 - Molecular cloning, CRISPR and protein expression
 - Plant and animal cell culture, transgenics and metabolomics
 - Bioinformatics, computational biology and project management
- Interns are Master's level and already hold a BSc in biology, biochemistry or related disciplines
- Funding support may be available through [Growing Opportunities program](#)

Who should host an MBtec intern?

- Organizations in the biotechnology, agri-tech, and agricultural-related sectors
- Employers seeking interns with advanced wet-lab and computational biology skills
- Companies able to host four-month, full-time internships (September starts can be extended to eight months, if desired)

**Connect with UBC to learn more
and start hiring**





INNOVATING THE FUTURE OF FOOD: CAHRC AND STEM MINDS HOST NATIONAL HACKATHON

On March 3, CAHRC, in partnership with [STEM Minds](#), hosted the Food & Farming Hackathon, bringing together students, innovators, and industry professionals from across Canada to explore solutions to real-world challenges in agriculture. The hybrid event welcomed participants both virtually and in person, marking CAHRC's first hackathon-style initiative, and one that proved to be highly engaging and well received.

The event attracted participants from a range of backgrounds, including high school and post-secondary students, job seekers, and aspiring innovators. Throughout the day, teams collaborated to develop creative solutions to challenges related to food systems, sustainability, and agricultural innovation. By working together to research problems, brainstorm ideas, and present their solutions, participants gained valuable experience in problem-solving, teamwork, and rapid innovation.

Tackling Real Challenges in Agriculture

During the hackathon, teams focused on topics that are shaping the future of the agriculture and food sector. Participants worked closely with mentors and industry representatives, gaining insight into the real challenges facing the sector while exploring how their skills could contribute to meaningful solutions.

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For many participants, the hackathon provided a first look at the diverse and technology-driven career opportunities available within agriculture today. Events like this help highlight how disciplines such as engineering, data science, environmental science, and technology are increasingly connected to modern food and farming systems.

"The Hackathon was a really engaging and fast-paced experience for our team. Working under a tight time limit pushed us to think quickly and collaborate efficiently while applying the engineering design process to a real-world agricultural problem. It was exciting to take a complex challenge and develop a solution that combined sustainability, economics, and community engagement. Overall, it was a great opportunity to represent North Island College (NIC) and apply our skills in a practical setting."

Connor Gallagher, Team captain for The Bulldozers,

Inspiring the Next Generation of Innovators

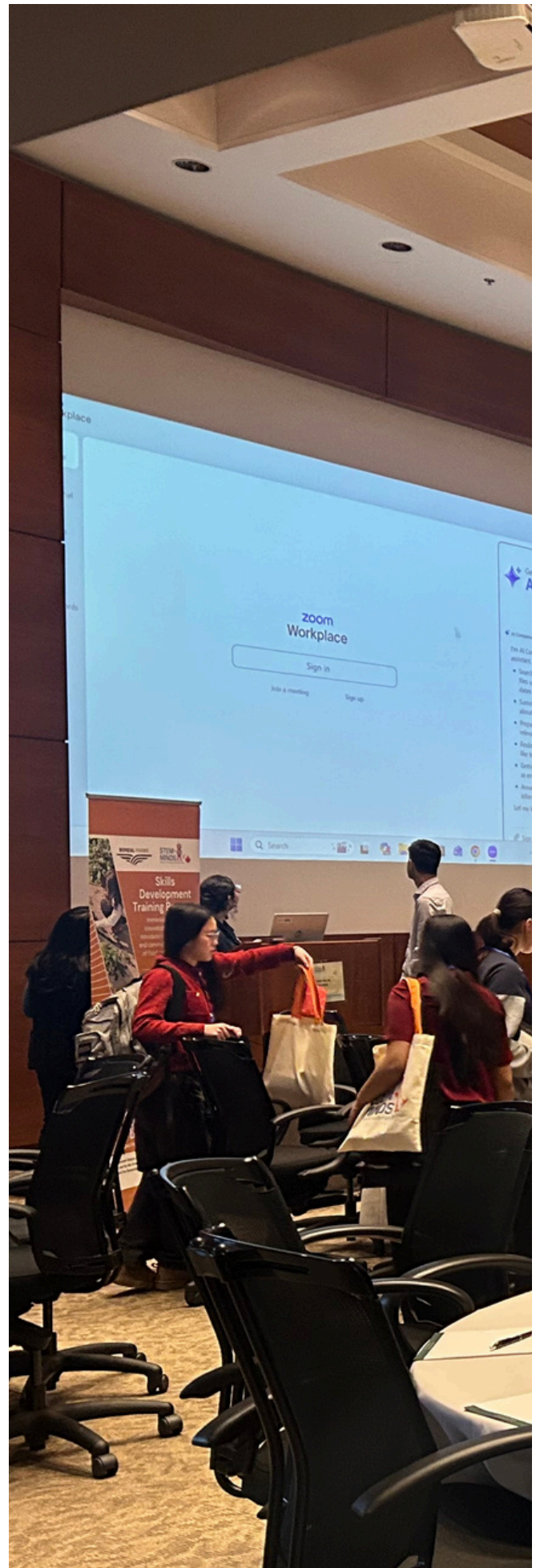
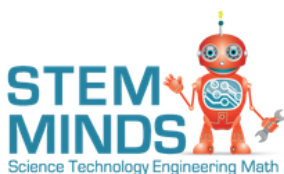
Beyond the competition itself, the event emphasized collaboration, learning, and career exploration. Participants had the opportunity to connect with industry professionals, share their ideas, and gain feedback on their solutions. These interactions helped demonstrate how innovative thinking and cross-disciplinary skills can play an important role in addressing challenges within agriculture and food systems.

The success of this first hackathon highlights the value of creating opportunities that connect emerging talent with the agriculture sector. By bringing together students, educators, and industry partners, the event showcased how collaboration and fresh perspectives can help drive innovation and inspire the next generation of agricultural leaders.

CAHRC is proud to have partnered with STEMMinds on this initiative and looks forward to continuing to explore new ways to engage students and innovators with Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector.

"During the Food and Farming Hackathon we realized that simply giving a topic your full attention for a few hours can really grow your perspective. I would recommend that any student try exploring a field they've never considered before, it might give you something you never expected: a completely new outlook."

Fallon Hayter, Team captain for WestCoast Best Coast





AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY



BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF 2050



Canada's recent commitments of innovation dollars for the agri-food sector are a vital step, but money alone won't deliver the productivity and resilience policymakers promise. Executive Director, Jennifer Wright of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, recently had the opportunity to chat with Jesse Hirsh, founder of [The Future Herd podcast](#). Here she emphasized that the sector "can't automate its way into the future without people." Investment in robotics, AI, and precision systems will only succeed if matched by deliberate work to grow the workforce that can adopt, operate, and improve those technologies.

Workforce capacity is the real limiting factor. New equipment and digital systems require operators, technicians, managers, and trainers with upskilling pathways and incentives to stay in the sector. That means funding must explicitly support skills development and retention programs alongside hardware and software pilots.

Building that workforce requires collaboration is treated as infrastructure. Industry, educators, and community partners must align curricula, credentials, and hiring needs so training is relevant and scalable. That prevents duplication and reduces the risk of "misfit" programs that fail to produce usable talent.

A practical training ecosystem will be hybrid and flexible: micro-credentials for precise competencies, on-the-job learning to translate theory into practice, remote delivery to reach dispersed communities, and immersive tools like VR to accelerate hands-on skills. These approaches let innovation dollars multiply their impact by turning expensive technology trials into learning opportunities that raise overall sector capability.



Episode 4: Building the Workforce of 2050 (with Jennifer Wright)

Ep 4 · February 9, 2026

Jennifer Wright (CAHRC) joins Jesse Hirsh to explore the skills, training models, and collaboration needed to prepare Canada's agri-food workforce for 2050.



Photo courtesy of The Future Herd

Finally, the sector needs mechanisms to move from conversation to action: short-term deliverables, iterative planning, and clear accountability so progress is visible and sustained. Funding calls should require workforce plans, measurable training outcomes, and partnerships that bind education providers to industry needs.

Canada's investment in agri-food innovation can catalyze transformation — but only if policymakers and funders treat people and skills as core components of every project. Align funding with workforce development, make collaboration central, and commit to pragmatic, measurable steps so technology investments deliver real benefits on farms and in food systems.

 **PODCAST**

**LOOKING FOR A VOICE ON CANADA'S
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From keynote talks to podcasts and media features.

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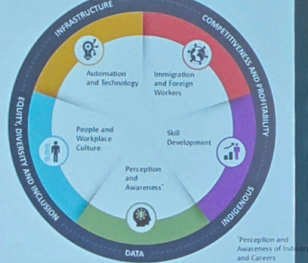


A PATH FORWARD =

A WHOLE-OF-INDUSTRY APPROACH

Chronic labour shortages are causing a crisis across agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing, costing the Canadian economy billions each year.

Finding long-term solutions calls for a united approach from industry, communities, academia, and government.



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:

- [UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO ROBOHUB SYMPOSIUM, APR 17](#)
- [NORFOLK AG CONNECT, APR 23](#)
- [SASKATCHEWAN AGRI-VALUE FORUM, APR 30-MAY 1](#)
- [CEWIL CONFERENCE, MAY 19-22](#)
- [AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION COUNCIL CONFERENCE, MAY 26-27](#)
- [NWSP WORKFORCE SUMMIT 2026, JUN 10-11](#)

Other events:

- [CANADIAN FRESHWATER AQUACULTURE CONFERENCE, APR 7-8](#)
- [NATIONAL HOLSTEIN CONVENTION, APR 15-19](#)
- [CANADIAN PRODUCE MARKETING ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, APR 28-30](#)
- [SIAL CANADA, APR 29-MAY 1](#)
- [ANIMAL NUTRITION CONFERENCE OF CANADA, MAY 5-7](#)
- [AGSCAPE AGM, MAY 7](#)



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