



Nova Scotia Agricultural Labour Market Forecast to 2025

With a heavy reliance on foreign workers and a large and rapidly widening labour gap, Nova Scotia's agriculture sector faces significant challenges in the years ahead.

Provincial Overview

In 2014, the agriculture sector in the province of Nova Scotia employed 9,200 people, or roughly 2% of Canada's agricultural workforce. Although it was the fourth-smallest agriculture sector employer in Canada, it had the highest share of agricultural workers of any Atlantic province.

The 'tree fruit and vine'* and the 'dairy' industry are the dominant agricultural employers in the province, accounting for one-third of the province's agricultural workforce.

The province's agriculture sector relies heavily on foreign workers. In 2014, the sector employed 1,400 foreign workers, which represents slightly more than 15% of its total workforce. Only Ontario and British Columbia have a heavier reliance on this labour source.

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

The province's foreign workers are concentrated in three agriculture industries. Three in five (60%) are employed in the 'tree fruit and vine' industry, slightly more than one in five (21%) are employed in the 'field fruit and vegetable' industry, and slightly less than one in five (19%) are employed in the 'greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture' industry.

The 'tree fruit and vine' industry, the province's largest agricultural employer, is also one of the most labour intensive, with many products needing to be hand-picked and packed. Because of this, the industry faces labour challenges, especially during seasonal peaks.

In 2014, Nova Scotia's agriculture sector employed 9,200 people.

The province was unable to fill 500 jobs, which cost the industry \$15 million.

By 2025, a predicted 3,500 jobs could be at risk due to a lack of domestic labour.



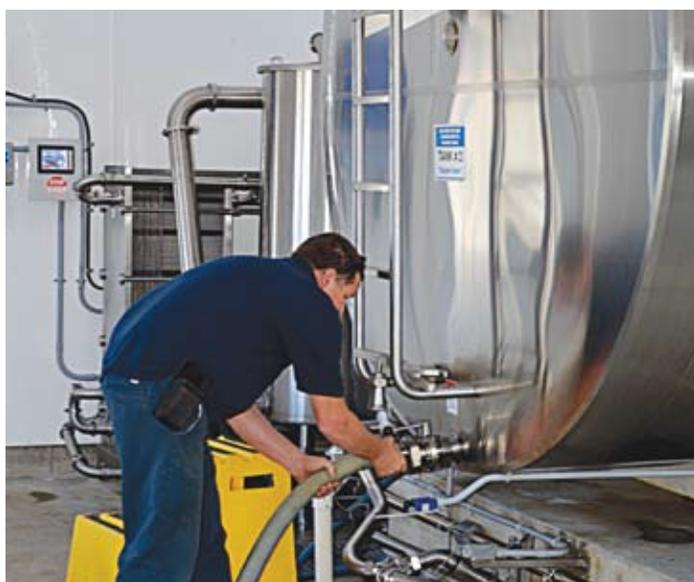
In 2014, the province's agriculture sector saw a moderate labour gap, and 500 jobs went unfilled due to a lack of workers. Between now and 2025, an aging agricultural workforce and a declining number of young people in the province will further reduce the number of domestic workers available. At the same time, the province's need for agricultural labour will rise as a result of bright production outlooks for a number of key agricultural industries, including the 'tree fruit and vine' and the 'greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture' industries.

As a result of these demographic and production trends, Nova Scotia's agricultural labour gap is expected to expand substantially between now and 2025.

Labour Trends and Industry Forecast

The demand for agricultural labour in Nova Scotia experienced growth of 0.8% per year between 2004 and 2014, which is much higher than the nationwide average of 0.1%.

However, the province's labour supply has not kept pace with the growing demand. In 2014, 500 jobs went unfilled because not enough workers could be found, which cost the province \$15 million in lost sales.



In 2014, labour shortages cost Nova Scotia's agriculture sector an estimated \$15 million, or 2.6% of sales.

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

- 30% experienced production losses
- 22% experienced production delays
- 22% experienced lost sales

These labour shortfalls not only affected sales, they also caused production losses and delays, in addition to delayed expansion plans.

Between now and 2025, an older-than-average workforce and a rising number of retirements will result in a further decline in the number of workers. The labour supply is expected to shrink by 1.4% per year between now and 2025, which is faster than the average of 0.9% for all of Canada.

Over the same time period, the province's need for agricultural labour will continue to grow. Due to bright production outlooks for a number of Nova Scotia's agricultural industries, especially for the 'tree fruit and vine' industry and the 'greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture' industry, the demand for labour is expected to grow by an average of 1.4% per year until 2025.

With a growing need for workers and a shrinking workforce, the province's agriculture sector will face a rapidly widening labour gap. By 2025, there will be 3,500 more jobs than the domestic workforce can fill, which means that nearly one in three jobs, or 31% of the total number of jobs needed to service the sector, will potentially be at risk.

While the entire sector will be affected by the labour gap, the industry will experience the greatest increase in the number of jobs at risk. The toughest jobs to fill across all agriculture industries will be "managers in agriculture" positions, which include both owner-operators and hired managers, and "general farm workers."

Meeting the Challenge

Because of its heavy reliance on foreign workers, Nova Scotia has a high number of jobs that can't be filled by domestic workers. In 2014, the province had the third-largest labour gap relative to demand among the provinces.

Over the next few years, the effect of a high rate of retirement and a dwindling supply of young people in the province will increase this gap considerably. By 2025, there will not be enough domestic workers to fill the nearly one in three jobs (31%) required for the agriculture sector to reach its production potential.

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

- Declining populations in rural areas make it difficult for employers with operations in rural areas to attract workers. More than one in three employers (37%) cited this as a challenge compared to an average of 31% across Canada.
- More than one in five employers (22%) suggested that insufficient compensation was a retention challenge, which is one of the highest shares of any province.
- Nova Scotia has an older-than-average agricultural workforce, which will result in a high rate of retirement and a loss of experienced workers.
- At 13%, the province's involuntary turnover rate for agricultural employment is nearly twice the national agricultural average of 7%.

About This Fact Sheet

The data cited in this fact sheet is based on the results of a three-year study that examined the labour market in Canada's agriculture sector. Information was collected by modelling labour demand and supply by province, commodity, and occupation; conducting a survey of and interviews with more than 1,000 sector stakeholders; and validating the results through focus groups and webinars. To read the accompanying report, or to access additional provincial, commodity, or national fact sheets and reports, please visit www.AgriLMI.ca.



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

- Nova Scotia's agriculture sector has the lowest voluntary turnover rate in the country. The province's voluntary turnover rate is just 6%, compared to 18% across Canada.
- Access to training programs, mentorships, and internships have the potential to create more skilled labour.

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

For more information on production trends and labour market challenges for Nova Scotia's agriculture sector, please refer to the accompanying report available at www.AgriLMI.ca.

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

Photo credits: Alberta Milk, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, Murray Porteous, Lydia Schouten

