

LABOUR SHORTAGE IN ALBERTA AGRICULTURE

Canada, and Alberta in particular, face growing agricultural labour shortages. In 2017, [47 per cent of Canada's agriculture employers](#) had difficulty finding workers, leaving 16,500 jobs unfilled and \$2.9 billion in lost sales. In 2021, employers across agricultural sectors [reported labor shortages](#): 53 per cent in food and beverage manufacturing, 24 per cent in ag-tech, 21 per cent in livestock production and 17 per cent in grain and seed production. In 2022, [62 per cent of agri-business owners](#) reported recruiting challenges, leaving [28,000 jobs unfilled](#) in peak season and \$3.5 billion in lost sales. By 2029, an estimated [123,000 Canadian agri-food jobs](#) will go unfilled.

Despite high [average weekly agriculture wages](#) and [agricultural operating revenue](#), Alberta is projected to face the largest labour gap among the provinces: [19,600 agriculture jobs will go unfilled by 2029](#). Much of the shortage will occur in [livestock farming operations](#).

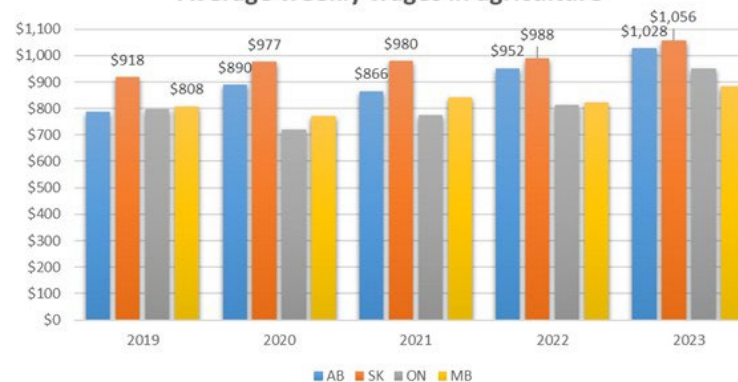
Agricultural labour shortages in Alberta occur for various reasons:

- Physical demands of farm work make it less appealing to many workers.
- Farm work is seasonal, whereas most workers seek full-time job security.
- Rural population migrating to large cities leave rural farms short of workers.
- [Skills mismatch](#) (farm workers often lack the technical skills/knowledge to operate today's sophisticated farming tools/equipment).
- Farm work offers lower wages compared to other sectors of the economy.
- [Retiring baby boomer farmers](#) have few young farmers taking their place.

To address the shortages, Alberta agri-food sector hires [three times as many foreign workers](#) as Manitoba or Saskatchewan. While some say curtailing temporary foreign worker programs will increase hiring of Canadian workers, studies show the [impact is smaller](#) than what is claimed. Strategies proposed to address the worker-shortage issue

in a 2024 Alberta Food Processors Association study include: developing a hub to provide concierge service to employers; developing online tools to help employers recruit and retain workers; and coordinating agriculture sector employment needs with post-secondary institutions that train workers and funnel the workforce to the sector.

Average weekly wages in agriculture



TFWs in agri-food sector

