

Agriculture Labour Shortages

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities



On-farm labour shortages have become a growing concern for Saskatchewan farmers, who are facing significant challenges in securing a reliable workforce.

Challenges

SPECIALIZED SKILLS NEEDED:

The agricultural sector requires expertise in heavy machinery operation and a deep understanding of agricultural inputs.

RELOCATION AND SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT:

Potential workers must be willing to live in rural areas and accept seasonal employment, complicating recruitment efforts.

AGING WORKFORCE: The aging farmer population exacerbates difficulties in maintaining a robust agricultural workforce.

FINANCIAL LOSSES: Billions of dollars in sales have been lost due to labour shortages. A survey by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council revealed:

- 28,200 agricultural jobs remained unfilled during peak season in 2022.
- A 3.7% decline in on-farm sales occurred as a result of these vacancies.

HIGH VACANCY RATES: The national job vacancy rate is 5.9%, with agriculture facing a peak vacancy rate of 7.4%. Two out of five agriculture employers were unable to hire all necessary workers.

INCREASED WORKLOAD: Farmers are working longer hours to compensate for labour shortages, which is becoming unsustainable.

The Voice of Rural Saskatchewan

Opportunities

Immediate and effective solutions are essential to improve the supply of skilled and unskilled labour, thereby protecting agricultural productivity and economic viability.

TARGETED STRATEGIES: Enhance workforce availability through focused initiatives.

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Support farm expansion, productivity enhancement, and the seizing of new marketing opportunities.

Advocacy Asks

To address these pressing labour shortages, SARM urges the following recommendations:

EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CANADA-SASKATCHEWAN JOB GRANT: Allow farmers and rural municipalities to qualify as eligible employers.

PROVIDE GRANT FUNDING FOR 1A DRIVER SHORTAGES: Ensure funding is available to address the 1A driver shortage in agriculture, as farm operations are currently ineligible.

INCENTIVIZE EMPLOYMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS: Develop programs in rural areas aimed at stabilizing the labour supply.

ADVANCE EMPLOYMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: Facilitate training well in advance of peak agricultural periods (e.g., seeding and harvest).

EVALUATE IMMIGRATION PROCESSES: Streamline processes and requirements to help newcomers secure necessary permits for entering the Canadian workforce and focus on efficiency and reduce barriers for employers seeking readily available employees.

The time is now to build a more resilient workforce and strengthen the economy of Saskatchewan. To welcome newcomers and support their journey to thrive in our communities, we must ensure the future of our agricultural sector remains robust and competitive.

Thank you
for your time!

SARM looks forward to working with the federal government on projects and initiatives positively impacting Saskatchewan's rural municipalities.