

**ALBERTA AGRI-WORKFORCE SATISFACTION SURVEY  
SUMMARY**

*Prepared for*  
**Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development**

*Prepared by*  
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## Food Processing

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The growth in Alberta's Agri-Industry and the lack of human resource planning has raised concerns regarding availability of labour, and current and future labour market needs. To remain competitive and attract and retain workers in the Agri-Industry, it is necessary for industry to have an understanding of workplace satisfaction and perceptions about employment in the food processing and primary production sectors. In the Alberta Agri-Workforce Satisfaction Survey employer and employee perceptions in the food processing and primary production sectors were analyzed to gain insight into the effectiveness of ARD's retention, productivity and recruitment programs and grants. Furthermore, the results will provide possible policy initiatives and human resource development opportunities in Alberta's agricultural and agri-food sectors.

The study had the following objectives:

1. Business characteristics of Alberta's food processing and primary production sectors;
2. Identify factors influencing attraction and retention of workers in the food processing and primary production sectors;
3. Determine utilization of training and professional development opportunities;
4. Provide employment outlooks; and
5. Determine the utilization of human resources strategies on employee recruitment and retention.
6. Identify possible policy initiatives and strategies to address labour supply issues in the agricultural industry.

### Recommendations

Recommendations were developed following analysis of data obtained through a survey of current employers and employees in Alberta's agricultural food processing and primary production sectors.

#### *Recommendation 1: Improve industry image*

Based on the data collected through this study, it is recommended that the industry work to improve the agricultural sectors image through marketing and advertising. Campaigns could focus on career paths and promotional progressions within the sector for individuals with lower levels of formal education. Several supporting factors and barriers were considered when making this recommendation.

Factors which suggest Alberta's agricultural industry suffers from a poor image include:

- *The main reasons for the shortage in qualified workers was attraction to other higher paying sectors and 'agricultural worker' is not an attractive occupation for youth.* Survey results showed that nine out of thirteen employers indicated worker shortage in the food processing sector was due to qualified workers being attracted to other higher paying industries.
- Eight out of thirteen employers reported "agricultural worker" was not an attractive occupation for youth.

- Job satisfaction results indicate 72% of employees surveyed were satisfied with their income/wages and 81% were satisfied with benefits. These results indicate that income and benefits in the sector are comparable to other industries.
- Educational attainment levels were slightly lower for agricultural workers than the general population, suggesting that formal education is less important in the sector. Workers with lower levels of education may be able to achieve greater success in the agricultural sector than elsewhere.

*Recommendation 2: Implement Human Resources Development Programs*

The majority of employers surveyed faced staff turnover issues over the past two years and few reported to have engaged in regular or formal human resource planning. Implementing human resource development programs would work to show food processing business the value to human resource planning in recruiting and retaining workers. Moreover, tools and strategies such career paths and laddering strategies would also work to improve the industry's image to attract potential new workers. Human resource planning would also work to help employers provide necessary training to current employees.

**Primary Agriculture**

**Recommendations**

*Recommendation 1: Promote Employee Development within the Industry*

Responses to the employee survey indicate a workforce that is dedicated to primary producer work in the agricultural sector:

- 62% of employees have been working the agricultural sector more than five years;
- 48% of employees have only worked in the agricultural sector; and
- 70% of employees are planning to continue working in the agricultural sector for the next five years (70% plan to continue working for their current employer).

Responses from the employee survey indicate that there is little formal training offered to employees:

- 49% of employees have not received any basic training.

Employers noted that lack of opportunity for advancement is a major reason for workers quitting their job. Additionally, employers projected a need for more farm supervisors and specialized livestock workers over the next five years.

Through partnering with industry and appropriate training institutions, ARD can assist in the development of education and training programs. Training programs can provide employees with a better defined career path within the primary producers agricultural sector and ensure employers have the skills needed for their organizations.

*Recommendation 2: Highlight the Lifestyle Associated with the Sector*

Although employers note that the desire for increased wages is a primary factor in why workers quit their job, responses from the employee survey indicate otherwise:

- Only 8% of employees reported that their current wage has a negative impact on their job satisfaction;
- 71% of employees reported being satisfied with their current wage;
- 72% of employees reported that the type of work was what attracted them to the agricultural sector;
- 82% of employees reported that the family-friendly environment of their work positively impacted their job satisfaction;
- 78% of employees reported that flexible work arrangement positively impacted their job satisfaction;
- 86% of employees reported being satisfied with their co-worker relationships;
- 81% of employees reported being satisfied with the safe work environment; and
- 91% of employees reported being satisfied with the overall worker conditions.

Thus, while appropriate worker compensation is necessary in any industry or sector, it does not appear to be the main motivating force for primary producer workers in the agricultural sector. As such, efforts to recruit workers in the agricultural sector should not focus on its level of pay and benefits, but rather the intangible aspects of the work that seem to underlie current employee job satisfaction.