



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Agriculture labour market information and forecast 2023-2030



Key Findings

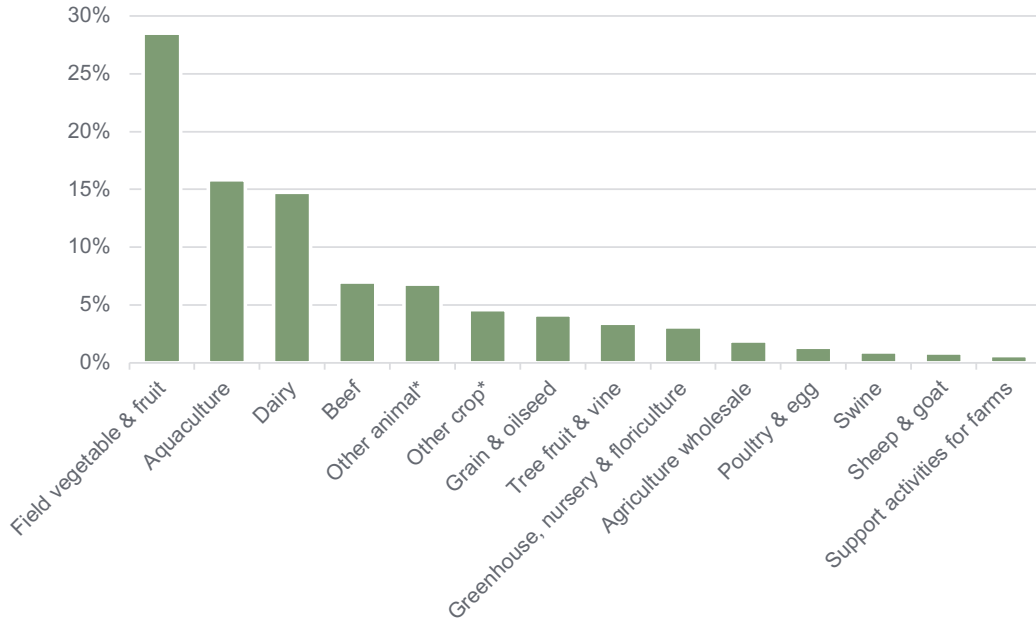
- The economy of Prince Edward Island (PEI) relies significantly on the agriculture sector, with more than 4 per cent of the provincial workforce employed in this sector, primarily in the field vegetable and fruit industry (Chart 1).
- Nearly half of agriculture employers in PEI reported being unable to find workers in 2022, which highlights the prevalence of labour shortages.¹
- The rural location of agriculture operations in the province is the top recruitment barrier for employers.
- The province is expected to have robust population growth. Educating potential workers about career opportunities in agriculture will be key to attracting job seekers to the sector.

Current Workforce

- PEI employs roughly 1 per cent of the agriculture workforce in Canada. This amounts to over 4,300 domestic workers during peak season in 2022.²
- Field vegetable and fruit is the largest agriculture industry, employing nearly 29 per cent of the agriculture workforce. This is followed by the aquaculture and dairy industries (Chart 1).
- Around 640 foreign workers were employed in the sector in 2022, representing approximately 13 per cent of the province's agricultural workforce.³
- The number of foreign workers in the sector has increased over 70 per cent since 2017.⁴
- The sector had around 300 job vacancies during the peak season in 2022, equating to a 7.2 per cent vacancy rate.⁵

¹Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023 (n=19). | ² Statistics Canada; The Conference Board of Canada. | ³ Statistics Canada, Table: 32-10-0218-01. Does not include support services or agriculture wholesale. | ⁴ Foreign workers include workers brought in through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program or Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. Does not include immigrants or permanent residents. | ⁵ The Conference Board of Canada Model of Occupations, Skills and Technology.

Chart 1: The field vegetable and fruit industry is the largest agriculture employer.
 Share of employment (domestic and foreign workers) at peak, 2022, Prince Edward Island.



Source: Statistics Canada; The Conference Board of Canada.

*Other crop is primarily combination fruit and vegetable farming and mixed crop farming. Other animal is primarily mixed animal farming.

Employer Survey Insights

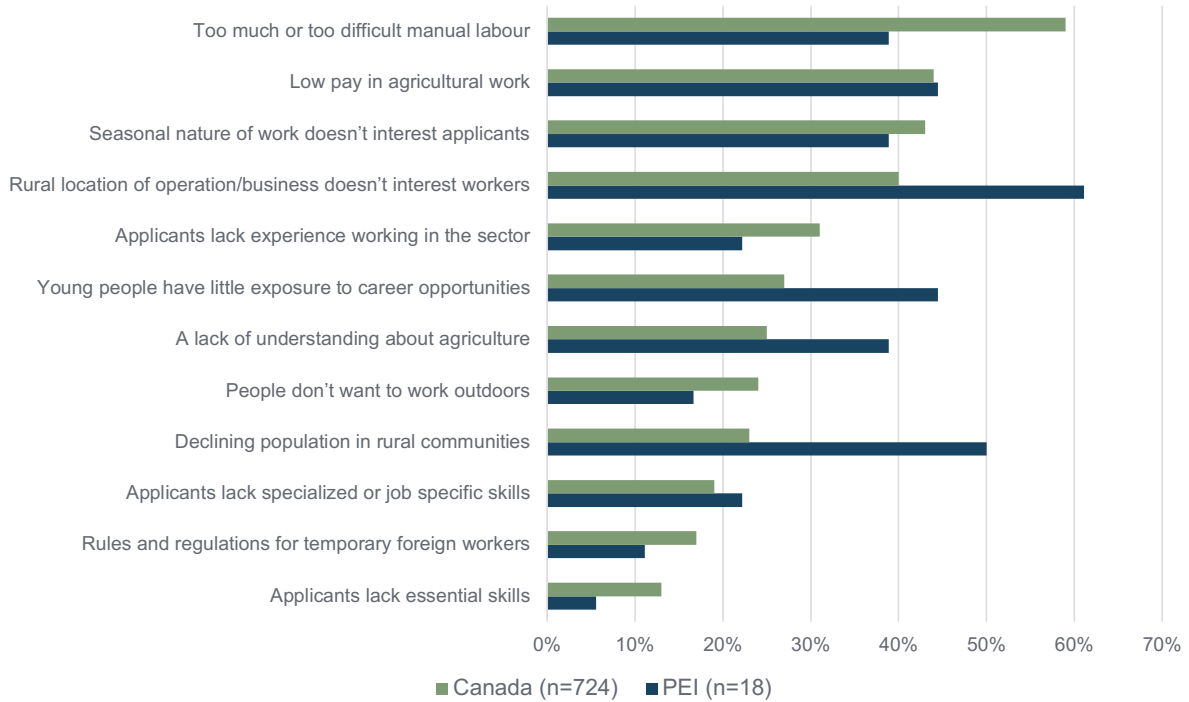
- Roughly half (47 per cent) of agricultural employers in PEI were not able to hire all the workers they needed in 2022, surpassing the national average of 44 per cent.⁶
- Almost half (47 per cent) of employers in PEI received only one or two domestic applicants for their job postings and 21 per cent received none.⁷
- As a result of these shortages, nearly 90 per cent of employers reported production delays, 78 per cent expressed excessive stress and hours for owner/operator and other staff, and 56 per cent cited lost revenues.⁸
- Sixty-one per cent of employers cited rural location as a barrier to recruitment. In contrast, only 40 per cent of employers across Canada faced this challenge (Chart 2).⁹
- Nearly 45 per cent of employers in PEI cited young individuals having little exposure to career opportunities in the sector as a prominent factor hindering recruitment, relative to only 27 per cent of employers across Canada.¹⁰
- PEI’s agriculture sector had a voluntary turnover rate of 12 per cent in 2022, well above the estimated 7.7 per cent turnover rate for all sectors in Canada.¹¹

⁶ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023 (n=19). | ⁷ Ibid. | ⁸ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023 (n=9). | ⁹ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023 (n=18). | ¹⁰ Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023 (n=18). | ¹¹ The voluntary turnover rate is the number of voluntary departures as a share of the total number of workers in a year. Voluntary departures are comprised of workers who quit, including seasonal workers who leave before contract completion. Turnover rate was calculated by industry and then weighted based on the industry share by province. Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023; The Conference Board of Canada.

Chart 2: Rural location is the top barrier to agriculture employment in PEI.

Share of employers.

Q: What are the top five factors that make recruitment of workers at your agricultural operation more difficult?



Source: Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Employer Survey 2023.

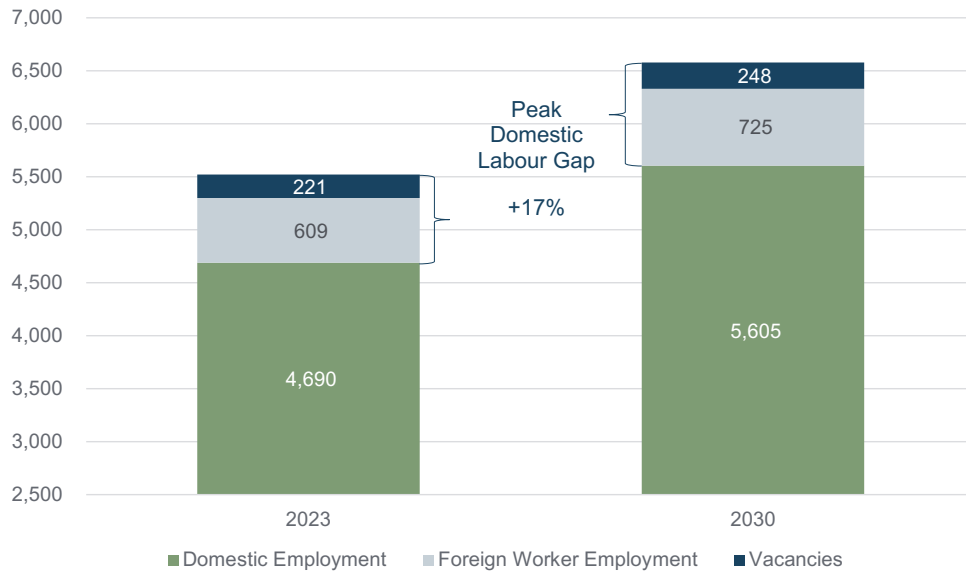


Labour Market Forecast

- Labour demand is expected to increase from 5,500 in 2023 to 6,600 in 2030 as the sector recovers from Hurricane Fiona and the 2021 export ban on potatoes is lifted.¹²
- Almost one-third (1,110 workers) of its current domestic workforce is expected to retire between 2023 and 2030. These retirements will be offset by growth in the labour supply coming from the 130 immigrants and 940 school leavers projected to enter the workforce by 2030.¹³
- Domestic employment will increase from 4,700 in 2023 to 5,600 in 2030 with most of this growth happening over the next couple of years.
- The growth in labour supply will not be able to meet expected demand. The peak domestic labour gap is forecast to increase by 17 per cent over the next 8 years, leaving over 970 positions unfilled domestically (Chart 3).¹⁴
- Foreign worker employment is expected to rise, but around 250 vacancies are expected to persist by 2030. Notably, over 35 per cent of these vacancies will be concentrated in the province’s field fruit and vegetable industry.
- Thirty-six per cent of these vacancies will be specialized livestock workers and farm machinery operators, 26 per cent for livestock labourers and 14 per cent for harvesting labourers.

Chart 3: The peak domestic labour gap grows over the forecast period.

Number of workers required at peak season in Prince Edward Island, forecast.



Source: The Conference Board of Canada’s Model of Occupations, Skills and Technology.

Foreign workers include workers brought in through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program or Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. Does not include immigrants or permanent residents. The peak number of foreign workers is less than the cumulative total employed over the year since not all workers will be employed simultaneously.

¹² The export ban on seed potatoes still remains in place. As they make up 10 per cent of supply, there is room for further growth in the medium term as restrictions are lifted. When that will occur is still unclear. | ¹³ School leavers is the number of workers finished school (all levels of education) and entering the workforce. | ¹⁴ Domestic labour gap is the difference between the total number of workers required and the number of domestic workers employed which equals foreign worker employment plus the number of vacancies. Estimated at peak to reflect maximum demand during seasonal peaks in agriculture.



Building the Future Workforce

- PEI will have the fastest population growth among all provinces in 2023, with international migrants driving most of this growth.¹⁵ Ensuring new workers have the training required to work in the sector will be key.
- The rural location of agriculture operations in PEI is the main barrier to recruitment in the sector. Offering support for workers to relocate to rural areas and creating appealing, sustainable rural communities for workers and their families could help overcome this hurdle.

Agriculture Sector Definition

CAHRC's definition of agriculture includes crop and animal production (NAICS 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1119, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125 and 1129), support services (NAICS 1151 and 1152), and agriculture wholesale industries (NAICS 4111 and 4183).

About This Factsheet

The data cited in this factsheet is based on a Labour Market Information (LMI) study that took place between March and September 2023. This study involved modelling labour demand and supply by province, commodity, and occupation; conducting a survey of more than 1,400 sector stakeholders; conducting five regional focus groups; and validating the results through webinars as well as an advisory group presentation. For more information about agriculture LMI please, visit www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/programs/agri-lmi.

The study was initiated by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), a national, nonprofit 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.

This research was conducted by The Conference Board of Canada, our country's foremost independent organization for applied research. Through the use of sophisticated data modelling, best-in-class forecasting and multi-method research approaches, they deliver research to help leaders take action.

¹⁵ The Conference Board of Canada.



The use of any part of this publication, whether it is reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (including electronic, mechanical, photographic, photocopying or recording), without the prior written permission of CAHRC is an infringement of copyright law.

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2024

T: 613.745.7457 | E: info@cahrc-ccrha.ca



Funded by the Government
of Canada's Sectoral Workforce
Solutions Program



This document may be downloaded from www.cahrc-ccrha.ca | All rights reserved. © 2024 CAHRC

Photo credits: [GVictoria](#) | [V. J. Matthew](#) | [Elena Elisseeva](#)