



News Release

For immediate release

Keeping Canadians and workers in the food supply chain safe

April 13, 2020 – Ottawa, Ontario – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Today, the Government of Canada is announcing \$50 million to help farmers, fish harvesters, and all food production and processing employers, put in place the measures necessary to follow the mandatory 14-day isolation period required of all workers arriving from abroad.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is the clear top priority in managing COVID-19, so the Government of Canada is working very closely with provinces, territories and stakeholders to maintain the strength of Canada's food supply chain. Before the pandemic, the food sector was already challenged by significant labour shortages and it is anticipated there will be even more jobs to fill, requiring a variety of skills.

In many regions across Canada, producing a variety of quality foods to be sold at affordable prices relies upon the contributions of experienced temporary foreign workers right from planting season to harvest—particularly for fresh fruits and vegetables. Fish, seafood and meat processing plants are also reliant on the addition of these workers.

This is an important reason why the Government of Canada granted an exemption for temporary foreign workers from travel restrictions to Canada, along with other foreigners with student and work visas, provided they adhere to a strict 14-day isolation protocol upon arrival.

The rules of the mandatory isolation period have been clearly defined and distributed to the employers, who themselves are committed to protecting the health of their communities and their workers. Government authorities will continue to proactively communicate and engage with employers, source countries and other stakeholders on public health requirements. Those who do not comply with the Quarantine Act or the isolation protocol will face severe fines and sanctions. Under proposed changes, employers could also face significant penalties, and a possible ban from the program, if they prevent adherence to the self-isolation order.

In addition to the responsibility of paying the workers for the two weeks during which time they cannot work, many employers are also responsible for providing workers with transportation and accommodations, as well as access to food and basic supplies needed to meet all of the conditions imposed by public health authorities.

Recognizing the importance of this responsibility, the federal government will provide support of \$1,500 for each temporary foreign worker, to employers or those working with them to ensure requirements are fully met. The funding is conditional on employers not being found in violation of the mandatory 14-day isolation protocols or any other public health order. This program will be available as long as the Quarantine Act is in force and the isolation protocol is followed.

As labour circumstances are different across regions in Canada, the Government will work with interested provinces and territories in the coming days to ensure this funding is delivered in a manner that meets their needs and best ensures quarantine requirements are met.



Quotes

“I would like to thank farmers, food processing plant workers, truckers, inspectors, grocers, food bank volunteers and all those who are helping to provide us with quality and affordable food.”

- *The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food*

“Temporary foreign workers have long been key to our food supply. We will work with farmers and food processing employers to ensure they get the workers they need and that plans are in place to meet mandatory isolation requirements.”

- *The Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship*

“Temporary foreign workers have been an integral part of the Canadian workforce and food supply chain for decades. Today’s announcement will help to protect the health of Canadians, while ensuring a steady labour supply to support our economy and ensure our food security during these extraordinary times. There will always be jobs for Canadians who want to work and support these sectors.”

- *The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion*

“Fish and seafood provide a healthy sustainable protein choice that Canadians have always relied on. With this new funding, we’re ensuring the sector has the capacity to access the labour force needed while keeping Canadians and workers safe.”

- *The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard*

Quick Facts

- Temporary foreign workers play an important role in the Canadian economy with approximately 50,000 to 60,000 foreign agricultural, food and fish processing workers coming to work in Canada each year, which accounts for more than 60% of all foreign workers entering Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- Each year, despite the fact that the agricultural sector receives approximately 60,000 foreign workers, around 15,000 jobs remain vacant.
- No travellers including temporary foreign workers who present with COVID-19 symptoms are allowed to board international flights to Canada.
- This support is available for all food production firms that rely on temporary foreign workers, including primary agriculture and food processing, as well as fisheries and aquaculture.

Additional Link

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)

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