



## WORKING TOGETHER TO GROW HEALTHY FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR ONTARIO

Ontario's 3,500+ fruit and vegetable farms grow 125 different edible horticulture crops, annually producing \$2.3 billion (2017) in farm gate value. This is only made possible by the 30,000 farm-based, non-family jobs created to pick and process fruits and vegetables. At the national level, Canadian fruit and vegetable sector annually produces \$5.4 billion (2017) in farm gate value, supporting 249,000 (2017) jobs and \$9.8 billion in wages and salaries in the produce sector.

The seasonal nature and rural location of our crops makes it difficult to find a consistent supply of domestic workers willing to be employed on a seasonal basis. This is one of the reasons the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) is as important today as it was 50 years ago when it was launched. The acute shortage in rural workers extends even to year-round greenhouse operations who rely on other parts of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) to fill vacancies left unfilled even after local job ad postings.

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of SAWP/TFWP workers to Canada's food security. The health and safety of these crucial workers during the pandemic continues to be of the utmost importance to all edible horticulture growers.

Local workers benefit from the program as well: for every position filled by SAWP and TFWP, two full-time jobs are created for domestic workers along the value chain throughout the Canadian economy, totaling tens of thousands of additional local jobs. Here's how the program works for *them* – and *you*.

<p><b>1. LOCAL WORKERS FIRST:</b> We always try to hire locally first. In fact, every position filled by a SAWP/TFWP farm worker has at one point been advertised in local job banks. But with the lack of local workers for seasonal and rural jobs, we regularly rely on the SAWP and TFWP.</p>
<p><b>2. PROTECTED BY LAW:</b> Every SAWP/TFWP worker has a legal job contract signed by them and the employer. This protects the worker, giving them all the same rights and protections as local Canadian workers, including Employment Insurance.</p>
<p><b>3. EQUAL WAGES FOR EQUAL WORK:</b> Foreign workers are paid the same as Canadians doing the same job. There is no way around minimum wage, it's a requirement of the SAWP/TFWP rules.</p>
<p><b>4. BUILDING MORE THAN CANADA'S ECONOMY:</b> Over \$300 million of saved earnings are sent home by SAWP employees every year, over eleven times Canada's annual aid budget to developing regions like Mexico and the Caribbean. Seasonal jobs provide workers the opportunity to send their kids to good schools, buy a home, and start their own family business.</p>
<p><b>5. A GUARANTEED HOME:</b> For <b>SAWP</b>, workers are guaranteed housing provided by their employer at no cost to the worker. In the <b>rest of TFWP</b>, employers have to ensure affordable housing is available and may charge modest rent amounts approved by Service Canada.</p> <p><b>All housing is inspected every year by certified municipal or provincial health inspectors.</b></p>



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| <p><b>6. HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR ALL:</b> All SAWP/TFWP workers have mandated access to health care under public or private insurance. <b>SAWP</b> workers are covered by provincial coverage (e.g. OHIP in Ontario) from day one. In the <b>rest of TFWP</b>, where there is typically a waiting period before OHIP coverage kicks in (during which employers would be responsible for purchasing private coverage for the worker), this waiting period has been temporarily waived to ensure workers are covered against the risks of COVID-19 from day one.</p>  |
| <p><b>7. EXTRA PRECAUTIONS DURING COVID-19:</b> Worker protection requirements to address COVID-19 are established and enforced by the federal government, the provincial government, and local municipalities &amp; health units.</p> <p>Precautions to protect worker health include adjustments to worker housing, transportation, and work settings to create physical barriers between workers, or appropriate distancing, in addition to increased sanitation and use of personal protective equipment.</p> <p>Employers are communicating with their workers about the risks of COVID-19 and how individual employees can help prevent spread through individual actions. Employers are closely monitoring worker health regularly for COVID-19 symptoms.</p> |
| <p><b>8. A PATHWAY TO IMMIGRATION:</b> Immigration rules are set by the government. Not by farmers. That said, we are fully supportive of any pathway of immigration for workers that want one.</p>  |
| <p><b>9. ZERO TOLERANCE FOR NON-COMPLIANCE:</b> Non-compliant employers are fined, placed on probation, or excluded from the program in the future if they fail to meet the program's very high standards.</p> <p>Penalties for not complying with the new COVID-19 conditions include fines of up to a \$1 million and bans on using the SAWP/TFWP to hire workers, which can be made permanent.</p>  |

Additional information on SAWP and TFWP programs can be found on the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S) [website](#).

Additional information about steps growers are taking to protect workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and resources available to support growers, visit the OFVGA [COVID-19 webpage](#).