

1. Findings: Regions.

1.1. North Queensland

The following report presents the results of the Rural Industries Job and Skill Research for the North Queensland region. Results are also provided for the top industry in the region; Sugar Cane (71%).

A summary of the key results for the North Queensland region is provided below.

- In the North Queensland region, two in three businesses (67%) use contractors on a semi-regular/ regular basis. Contractors generally are hired for harvesting (51%), planting (38%) and spraying (10%).
- Less than one in six businesses (13%) have employed new staff in the past 12 months, with half (51%) sourcing new staff through a contact / friend / family member (incl. word of mouth) and one in ten (11%) sourcing through backpacker lodgings.
- Currently in the North Queensland region 5% of business have employment vacancies, in roles such as farm workers / farm hands (3%) and machinery operator / maintenance (2%). Further, 8% of businesses state that machinery skills / mechanical skills are missing from the workforce.
- One in six (15%) business owners and managers in the North Queensland region identify that they would like to improve on their IT / computer skills.
- The preferred methods of workforce training are participating in workshops or classes (35%), field days (22%) and hands on / on-site training (10%). Time commitment (16%) and cost (16%) are identified as the top impediments to training.

For further information regarding this research project, including methodology and background, please refer to the full Rural Industries Job and Skill Research Report.



1.1.1. Number of staff.

Table 1: Number of full time and part time staff (North Queensland)

	Nett 1 or more (% of businesses with ANY of these staff)	Number of employees in each position description						
		0	1	2	3	More than 3	TOTAL	Mean
North Queensland		n=63						
Full time staff	24%	76%	11%	11%	0%	2%	100%	0.4
Part time staff	19%	81%	13%	3%	2%	2%	100%	0.3
Sugar Cane		n=45						
Full time staff	20%	80%	11%	9%	0%	0%	100%	0.3
Part time staff	13%	87%	11%	0%	2%	0%	100%	0.2

Q1. Excluding yourself and any family members, how many full time staff do you employ? RECORD

NUMBER 0 - 999 (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Q2. Again excluding yourself and any family members, how many part time staff do you employ? RECORD

NUMBER 0 - 999 (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

1.1.2. Use of casual labour.

Table 2: Number of casual staff employed annually (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Nett 1 or more (% ANY)	37%	29%
0	63%	71%
1	8%	9%
2	5%	0%
3	11%	13%
More than 3	13%	7%
Mean	5.8	0.8

Q3a. And what about casual/seasonal staff on an annual basis? RECORD NUMBER 0 - 999 (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 3: Casual labour roles (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Most common roles		
Manual / general labour / various jobs	14%	7%
Transportation / driving, i.e. operating tractors, forklifts, farm vehicles	10%	7%
Harvesting	10%	13%
Picking	6%	0%
Planting	6%	9%
Least common roles		
Machinery operation	5%	7%
Stockwork incl. mustering, cattework, branding, husbandry, feeding stock*	5%	0%
Spraying	3%	0%
Packing shed worker*	3%	0%
Fencing	2%	0%
Repairs & maintenance*	2%	2%
Other	3%	4%
Not applicable - do not employ casual labour	63%	71%

Q3b. What does your casual labour do for you? DO NOT READ OUT. MR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

* Response option added to pre-existing codeframe - coded up from 'other (specify)' verbatims

1.1.3. Contractor supply.

Table 4: Use of contractors (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Use of contractors (Q4a)		
Yes	67%	82%
No	33%	18%
Number of contractors (Q4b)		
0	33%	18%
1	22%	27%
2	16%	22%
3	8%	11%
More than 3	21%	22%
Mean	2.2	2.5

Q4a. Do you use contractors on a semi-regular or regular basis? IF REQUIRED: not just a once off need or specialist need (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Q4b. How many contractors do you use? RECORD NUMBER 0 - 999 (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 5: Contractor roles (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Contractor roles (Q4c)		
Harvesting	51%	71%
Planting	38%	53%
Spraying	10%	13%
Manual / general labour / various jobs	6%	2%
Machinery operator / maintenance	6%	9%
Transportation / driving, i.e. operating tractors, forklifts, farm vehicles	3%	4%
Stockwork incl. mustering, cattlwork, branding, husbandry, feeding stock*	3%	0%
Irrigation	2%	2%
Shearing	2%	0%
Repairs & maintenance*	2%	2%
Other	2%	2%
Not applicable (do not employ contractors)	33%	18%

Q4c. What do your contractors do for you? DO NOT READ OUT. MR (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

* Response option added to pre-existing codeframe - coded up from 'other (specify)' verbatims

1.1.4. Employment positions.

Table 6: Position descriptions occupied (North Queensland)

	Number of businesses with staff in particular position descriptions	Number of employees in each position description						
		0	1	2	3	More than 3	TOTAL	Mean
North Queensland		n=63						
Owner / manager	98%	2%	22%	56%	11%	10%	100%	2.1
Farm worker / farm hand	32%	68%	21%	5%	3%	3%	100%	0.5
Machinery operator / maintenance	24%	76%	19%	0%	2%	3%	100%	0.4
Office manager / administration	17%	83%	16%	2%	0%	0%	100%	0.2
Supervisor	14%	86%	11%	3%	0%	0%	100%	0.2
Labourer (including pickers)	14%	86%	3%	3%	2%	6%	100%	0.9
Packing shed worker	6%	94%	0%	2%	3%	2%	100%	0.2
QA / marketing / sales	5%	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Technical specialist	2%	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Stockman	2%	98%	0%	2%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Other	5%	95%	3%	0%	0%	2%	100%	0.1
Sugar Cane		n=45						
Owner / manager	98%	2%	20%	58%	11%	9%	100%	2.1
Farm worker / farm hand	27%	73%	20%	2%	0%	4%	100%	0.4
Machinery operator / maintenance	22%	78%	20%	0%	2%	0%	100%	0.3
Office manager / administration	13%	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%	100%	0.2
Supervisor	11%	89%	9%	2%	0%	0%	100%	0.1
Labourer (including pickers)	7%	93%	4%	2%	0%	0%	100%	0.1
Packing shed worker	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
QA / marketing / sales	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Technical specialist	2%	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Stockman	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0.0
Other	4%	96%	2%	0%	0%	2%	100%	0.1

Q5a. Can you indicate how many employees you have using each of the following position descriptions?
 READ OUT. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 7: Types of roles versus type of employment (North Queensland)

	Type of employment					TOTAL
	Full time	Part time	Casual / seasonal	Contractor	Not applicable (do not employ staff in these roles)	
North Queensland	n=63					
Owner / manager	86%	22%	8%	0%	2%	100%
Farm worker / farm hand	19%	6%	13%	2%	68%	100%
Supervisor	13%	0%	2%	0%	86%	100%
Machinery operator / maintenance	8%	3%	8%	6%	76%	100%
Office manager / administration	6%	6%	5%	0%	83%	100%
QA / marketing / sales	3%	0%	2%	0%	95%	100%
Labourer (including pickers)	2%	2%	11%	0%	86%	100%
Stockman	0%	0%	2%	0%	98%	100%
Technical specialist	0%	0%	0%	2%	98%	100%
Packing shed worker	0%	0%	6%	0%	94%	100%
Other	2%	0%	2%	3%	95%	100%
Sugar Cane	n=45					
Owner / manager	82%	27%	9%	0%	2%	100%
Farm worker / farm hand	18%	2%	11%	2%	73%	100%
Supervisor	11%	0%	0%	0%	89%	100%
Machinery operator / maintenance	4%	2%	11%	7%	78%	100%
Office manager / administration	2%	4%	7%	0%	87%	100%
QA / marketing / sales	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Labourer (including pickers)	0%	2%	4%	0%	93%	100%
Stockman	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Technical specialist	0%	0%	0%	2%	98%	100%
Packing shed worker	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Other	2%	0%	2%	2%	96%	100%

Q5b. And do these roles tend to be full time, part time, casual or contractor positions? READ OUT. MR.
(Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

1.1.5. Changes in staffing.

Table 8: New staff (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
New staff roles (Q6b)		
Labourer (including pickers)	6%	0%
Farm worker / farm hand	3%	0%
Machinery operator / maintenance	3%	4%
Packing	2%	0%
Other	2%	0%
Not applicable (no new staff)	87%	96%

Q6b. With those new staff you employed within the last 12 months, what position descriptions were they filling? DO NOT READ OUT. MR (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 9: Sourcing of new staff (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
How new staff are sourced (Q7)		
Through a contact / friend / family member (incl. word of mouth)	51%	56%
Backpacker lodgings	11%	4%
Newspaper ads	8%	7%
Walk-bys	5%	4%
Labour hire company	3%	4%
Recruitment company	3%	4%
Ads on bulletin boards/around town	3%	2%
Contractors used on a regular basis*	3%	4%
Online job ads	2%	2%
Through the unis / TAFEs / accreditation courses / other education	2%	0%
Cane Growers Association	2%	2%
Other	0%	0%
Do not source / look for staff*	21%	20%

Q7. How do you currently source staff? DO NOT READ OUT. MR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

* Response option added to pre-existing codeframe - coded up from 'other (specify)' verbatims

1.1.6. Current employment vacancies.

Table 10: Current Employment Vacancies (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Current employment vacancies (Q8a)		
Yes	5%	2%
No	95%	98%
Positions currently vacant (Q8b)		
Farm worker / farm hand	3%	0%
Machinery operator / maintenance	2%	2%
Other	0%	0%
Not applicable (no vacancy gaps)	95%	98%

Q8a. Do you have any current vacancy gaps? (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Q8b. And what position descriptions are those vacancies for? DO NOT READ OUT. MR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=65)

1.1.7. Skills shortages.

Table 11: Skills shortages in entire workforce (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Types of skills shortages (entire workforce) (Q9a)		
Machinery skills – mechanical skills incl: maintenance / welding / fabricator	8%	9%
IT / computer literacy	5%	4%
Machinery operators	3%	4%
Strong work ethic	2%	2%
Previous farm / horticulture experience	2%	2%
Appropriate licence to operate	2%	2%
A person with common sense	2%	2%
Good experienced workers	2%	0%
Managerial skills incl: manager / supervisor	2%	2%
Other	0%	0%
No skills missing	79%	76%

Q9a. Are there particular skills missing in your workforce? DO NOT READ OUT. MR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 12: Skills shortages amongst owners and managers (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=61	n=45
Skills shortages amongst owners and managers (Q9b)*		
IT / computer skills	15%	16%
Accounting / book keeping	5%	4%
Marketing / sales skills	3%	0%
Machinery skills	3%	2%
Agronomy	3%	4%
Managerial skills	3%	0%
Financial management	2%	2%
Other	2%	0%
No / nothing	67%	73%

Q9b. As an owner or manager of the business, are there any particular skills you would like to improve on or have? RECORD VERBATIM (Base: Business owners and managers in North Queensland n=61)

* This question was open-ended capturing full verbatims. Verbatims have been coded into themes as shown above.

1.1.8. Qualifications and training.

Table 13: Qualifications and training (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Preference for staff with Certificate 2 and above qualifications (Q10a)		
Yes	11%	16%
No	89%	84%
Don't know	0%	0%
Preferred delivery method for workforce training (Q10b)		
Participating in workshops or classes	35%	31%
Field days	22%	22%
Hands on / on-site training	10%	11%
By any means	5%	7%
Face to face training / face to face	5%	4%
Participating in online courses	2%	0%
By Telephone / Skype	2%	0%
College / TAFE	2%	2%
Don't know	13%	13%
Other	0%	0%
Nothing / no training necessary	6%	9%

Q10a. Is there a preference to employee staff with certificate 2 and above qualifications? DO NOT READ OUT. SR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Q10b. What is your preferred delivery method for workforce training – e.g. face to face classes, online courses etc? DO NOT READ OUT. SR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

Table 14: Impediments to training (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Impediments to training (Q10c)		
Cost	16%	20%
Time commitment	16%	16%
Accessibility - distance to facilities	8%	4%
Staff motivation	8%	9%
Decline in the industry / lack of job	5%	4%
Lack of practical skills / experience on farm	5%	4%
Don't need more staff / don't need training	3%	4%
Limited information on course content / options	3%	4%
Lack of interest from young people	3%	4%
Accessibility – online connectivity	2%	0%
Availability of courses	2%	2%
Language barriers	2%	0%
Lack of government support / funds	2%	2%
Lost productivity / covering staff for training	2%	0%
Don't know	24%	22%
Other	3%	4%
Nothing	10%	9%

Q10c. What, if anything, inhibits the training of staff in your industry? DO NOT READ OUT. MR. (Base: Total North Queensland n=63)

1.1.9. Looking forward – employment numbers.

Table 15: Staff numbers in the next 2 years (North Queensland)

	Nett 1 or more (% businesses likely to have ANY of these staff)	Number of staff						TOTAL	Mean
		0	1	2	3	More than 3			
North Queensland		Minimum n=62							
Full time	31%	69%	11%	6%	6%	6%	100%	0.8	
Part time	11%	89%	6%	5%	0%	0%	100%	0.2	
Casual	27%	73%	8%	5%	5%	10%	100%	6.8	
Contract	45%	55%	6%	13%	5%	21%	100%	2.0	
Sugar Cane		Minimum n=44							
Full time	31%	69%	16%	4%	4%	7%	100%	0.8	
Part time	9%	91%	2%	7%	0%	0%	100%	0.2	
Casual	18%	82%	5%	5%	5%	5%	100%	0.5	
Contract	53%	47%	9%	18%	7%	20%	100%	2.2	

Q11. How many people do you envisage employing full time, part time, casual or contract in the next 2 years? (Base: Total North Queensland, excluding those who indicated don't know minimum n=62)

* NOTE: A small proportion of respondents indicated don't know to this question (3% or less). These responses are excluded from the charts above.

Table 16: Sample profile (North Queensland)

	Total North Queensland	Sugar Cane
Sample size (unweighted) n=	n=63	n=45
Primary Industry (SC4a)		
Sugar Cane	71%	100%
Beef - intensive or pastoral combined	13%	0%
Production Horticulture	8%	0%
Nursery and Garden	5%	0%
Sheep	3%	0%
Length of operation (Q15)		
Less than 5 years	0%	0%
Between 5 - 10 years	6%	7%
Between 10 - 20 years	10%	2%
Between 20 - 50 years	40%	36%
More than 50 years	44%	56%
Employment status (SC5)		
I am the sole or joint owner	83%	93%
I am a manager	14%	7%
I am an employee	3%	0%
Business role (SC3a)		
A primary producer	95%	96%
A supplier to primary producers	5%	4%
Business type (Q13)		
Family owned business	95%	98%
Corporate business	5%	2%
Annual turnover (Q14)		
Less than \$1 million	81%	87%
\$1 million to \$4.9 million	14%	11%
\$5 million to \$19.9 million	0%	0%
\$20 million and over	0%	0%
Refused/ don't know	5%	2%

SC3a. *And is the business...? READ OUT. SR*

SC4a. *Which industry sector does the business generate its primary stream of income from? DO NOT READ OUT. SR*

SC5. *Which of the following best describes your employment status within the business? READ OUT. SR*

Q13. *Is your business a...? READ OUT. SR*

Q14. *What is the annual turnover of the business? READ OUT. SR*

Q15. *How long has the business been in operation? DO NOT READ OUT. SR*

(Base: Total North Queensland n=63)