

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

QUEENSLAND AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PLAN 2022 - 2027



The Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027 is the culmination of a partnership between the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and Jobs Queensland (JQ) in collaboration with the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA). Agriculture has experienced chronic workforce shortages and these were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic responses.

The Plan was informed by the Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Environmental Scan and statewide stakeholder consultation. The agriculture workforce is present in every region in Queensland across metropolitan, rural and remote regions, and includes a broad range of seasonal, technical and professional roles. The industry is underpinned by diverse food, fibre and foliage producers who provide domestic and export markets with a range of commodities. National forecasts project that there will be changes in the composition of the agricultural workforce in the future with greater emphasis on professional and technical roles.

The Plan includes an overview of the research and stakeholder consultation and draws the findings into recommendations and actions to create the five-year Action Plan. This timeframe is important because it provides time and scope to reprioritise industry workforce issues in the short term while building a foundation for longer term action. The actions will assist the agriculture industry to be productive, innovative and sustainable by investing in workforce development.

PRIORITIES

The Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Environmental Scan highlighted four priority agriculture groups, based on gross value of production (GVP) and employment: grazing (beef cattle and grains), horticulture (fruit and nuts, vegetables, and nurseries), crops (sugar and cotton) and aquaculture.

Additionally, to guide and focus stakeholder consultations, four action areas were also identified:



Adaptability and business capability

Developing entrepreneurship and business capability for innovation and adaptation to change



Workforce attraction and diversity

Developing a diverse and inclusive future agriculture workforce



Workforce retention

Developing agriculture careers and opportunities and becoming employers of choice



Workforce skilling

Developing future workforce skills in agriculture

CONSULTATION

The stakeholder engagement program ran from July to November 2021 and included:

- Regional consultations in Boonah, Nambour, Dalby, Emerald, Atherton, Ayr and Mackay
- Focus groups with horticulture stakeholders, women in agriculture
- Online consultations with agriculture stakeholders and registered training organisations
- An online survey
- Interviews

The consultations revealed important ideas and information about workforce issues across industry sectors and regions. The consultations highlighted the need for actions that are industry-led, regionally responsive and supported by collaboration with all levels of government. Other priorities centred on education and training and identified the need to raise awareness of the industry and careers. Actions include engaging schools and school students as well as creating flexible career paths to meet the changing workforce needs of the industry.

The Action Plan

The success of the Plan is reliant on a continuing commitment to engaging a broad range of stakeholders while remaining flexible and open to opportunities. An overview and synopsis of the key themes, findings, goals and actionable recommendations are provided below.

GOAL

Queensland agribusinesses and their workforce are leaders in adopting contemporary technologies, management practices and innovations

- Strengthen innovation
- Build management and leadership capability
- Enhance resilience and readiness

Actions include

Knowledge brokering; building capability through resourcing, support and training; leadership development; access to business advice; and learning from disruption

GOAL

The agriculture workforce has access to flexible pathways to pursue rewarding careers and employment opportunities

- Develop flexible career and employment pathways
- Support regional development

Actions include

Partnering to clarify career pathways; enhancing regional networks and responses to retention issues; building regional leadership



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**Queensland Agriculture Industry
Workforce Plan 2022 - 2027**

GOAL

A diverse and capable workforce is attracted to careers and employment in agriculture throughout their working lives

- Raise the profile of agriculture and agriculture careers
- Diversify the workforce
- Promote regional approaches
- Improve recruitment and job readiness

Actions include

A state-wide awareness raising campaign profiling agriculture; raising awareness of careers and education and salaries in agriculture; enhancing regional level workforce planning; undertaking research; strengthening connections between industry and schools and improving job readiness for industry entrants.

GOAL

Queensland's agriculture workforce is appropriately skilled and supported by flexible training and education pathways that are industry-led and responsive to industry trends

- Prioritise agriculture in schools
- Address knowledge, skills and training gaps
- Provide flexible education and training pathways into employment
- Leverage regional resources and innovative partnerships

Actions include

Reinvigorating agriculture education in schools; advocacy for industry-led approaches to training; integration of digital capabilities and agtech in training and traineeships; raising awareness and access to education and training; collaborative data collection about skills; review core skills required for agriculture education; innovative partnerships to promote industry learning; enhanced extension and bridging programs; traineeships and apprenticeships; and continued resourcing for industry-based workforce and skills initiatives