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NCFA Election Position Statement

Labour Shortages in Agriculture and Agri-Food

The federal government must address the acute labour shortage within the agriculture and agri-food industry, and execute short and medium term solutions to ensure future sustainability and growth of the industry.

Background

- The agriculture and agri-food industry is an important contributor to the Canadian economy, generating 8% of national GDP.
- A chronic and severe labour shortage is one of the most significant challenges currently facing agriculture, impacting competitiveness, growth, and export opportunities. Recent studies suggest that Canada's farms are unable to fill 52,000 vacant positions.
- Livestock production requires animal care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Labour shortages are not an option as they directly impact on the health and welfare of animals.
- Hiring Canadian workers has always been, and always will be, the first priority. At the same time, however, it is proving increasingly difficult to attract a sufficient number of domestic workers.
- Recent changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) have made the labour challenges in the sector even more acute — especially for agri-food processors.
- Canada's entire agriculture value chain came together and developed the *Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Workforce Action Plan* that provides short and medium term solutions (<http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/workforce-action-plan>).

NCFA Position

- Labour shortages in the agriculture and agri-food sector are a long-standing problem that requires a meaningful long-term solution.
- However, there is also an immediate challenge that if not addressed in a timely manner will negatively change the landscape of Canadian agriculture permanently.
- The *Workforce Action Plan* recommends a dedicated agriculture and agri-food workforce program for agriculture and primary processing so they can hire workers from abroad as a backstop measure. The plan also calls for an improved pathway to permanent residency for successful agriculture and agri-food workers.
- The *Workforce Action Plan* also presents medium term solutions that address increasing the domestic labour supply and improving the knowledge and skills of workers.

Candidate Questions

What are your plans to address the chronic labour shortage in agriculture, both in the short and long-term?
Would you actively support the *Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Workforce Action Plan*?