

General Farm Workers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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General Farm Workers [NOC 2021: 85100/ NOC 2016: 8431]

General Farm Workers may also be called:

- *farm hand / ranch hand / cow hand*
- *beef cattle farm worker,*
- *cattle ranch labourer*
- *dairy farm worker*
- *farm machinery operator*
- *grain farm worker*
- *harvester machine operator*
- *hatchery worker*
- *poultry farm worker*
- *vegetable farm worker*
- *fruit farm labourer, fruit farm worker*
- *mushroom farm worker*
- *egg candler / gatherer / grader / packer*

1. What Would I Do?

General Farm Workers plant, cultivate and harvest crops, raise livestock and poultry, and maintain and repair farm equipment and buildings. Your duties may include:

- plant, fertilize, cultivate, spray, irrigate and harvest crops
- feed and tend livestock and poultry
- milk cows
- operate and maintain farm machinery and equipment
- detect disease and health problems in crops, livestock and poultry
- examine produce for quality and prepare for market

- set and monitor water lines, air flow and temperature in barns, pens and chicken coops
- clean stables, barns, barnyards and pens

More information:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for General Farm Workers**
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers>
- **Career Cruising Profiles for 'Farmer' and 'Fruit & Vegetable Grower'**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>
Available from the VPL Digital Library

2. Am I Suited For This Job?

Farm Workers should be:

- physically fit & have good physical stamina – work is physically demanding and you are on your feet most of the time
- hard-working
- detail-oriented

Farm Workers should:

- enjoy working outdoors
- enjoy working with machines
- work well as part of a team

Farm Workers work long hours and the workload often varies with the seasons. Work takes place both indoors and outdoors, so you may be exposed to various weather conditions. You use machinery, tools and heavy farm equipment, such as tractors, which can pose the risk of injury. You may be exposed to chemicals, such as pesticides, and dust and sand in the workplace.

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profile
- Career Cruising

3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

WorkBC reports that the **median** annual salary for **General Farm Workers** in British Columbia is \$37,541 with an \$18 median hourly wage rate across the province.

JobBank Canada lists hourly wages for BC's regions - **farm workers** can expect to make:

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
British Columbia	16.75	18.00	27.41
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	16.75	18.00	27.41
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	16.75	18.00	24.36

Source: <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

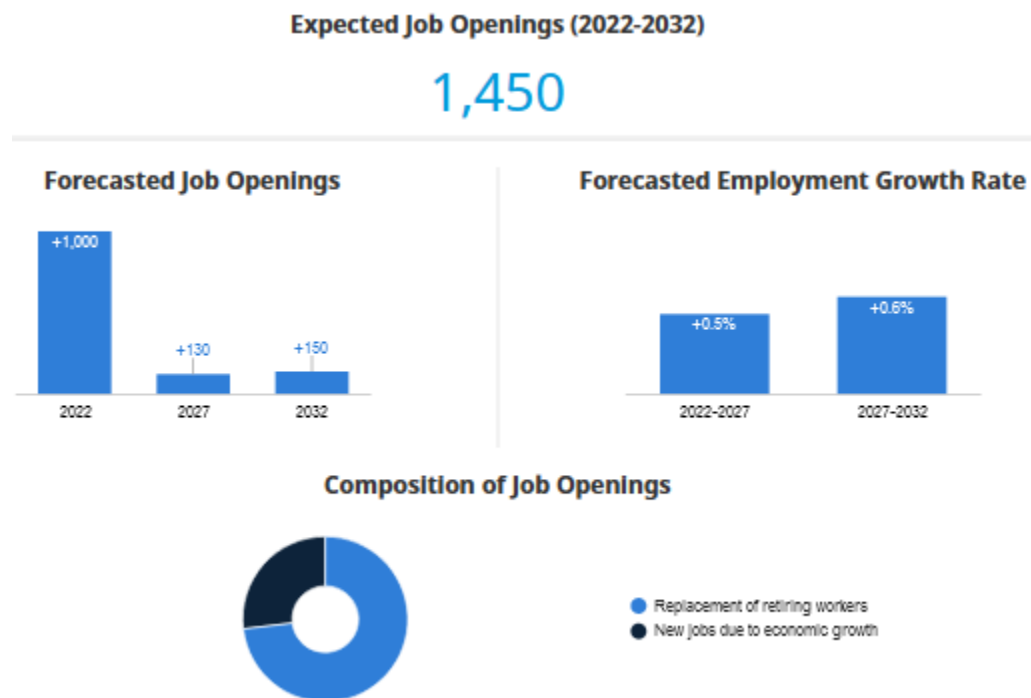
Your earnings fluctuate from year to year depending on weather conditions (which affect crop yields), the type of farm, and the market prices of your products. Some work full-time all year round, while others are employed only for part of the year. Seasonal workers may have to find other work during their off-season. Farmers & farm workers usually have to provide your own benefits. Some join farm organizations that offer group discounts on benefit packages.

Sources:

- WorkBC Career
- Career Cruising

4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

JobBank Canada reports that the employment outlook will be very limited for general farm workers in British Columbia for the 2022-2024 period.



Number of job openings by region for the period 2022-2023:

- Lower Mainland & Southwest - 860
- Vancouver Island/Coast - 270
- Thompson Okanagan - 180

Due to the seasonal nature of this occupation, employment opportunities will vary depending on the time of the year. Employment opportunities tend to be better during the summer months.

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profile
- Career Cruising
- Job Bank Canada Job Prospects

<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/outlook-occupation/9297/BC>

5. How do I become a Farm Worker?

In B.C. there is no certification required to be a farm worker. Many farmers learn their skills on the job, or by growing up on a family farm. It is possible to enter farm work as a labourer without training. However, those who wish to go further with their careers will need a diploma or degree, in plant sciences, or related subjects such as farm equipment mechanics, agricultural welding, tree pruning and pesticide application.

For information on Education/Training programs, see:

- Kwantlen Polytechnic University: Farm Schools (Richmond & Tsawwassen)
<https://www.kpu.ca/farmschools>
- University of Fraser Valley, Agriculture
<https://www.ufv.ca/agriculture/>
- UBC Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture (Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm): <https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/learn/practicum/>

Intern Programs:

- UBC Farm - Career Development In Land And Food Systems
<https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/learn/lfs496/>
- Young Agrarians Internship Positions
<https://youngagrarians.org/category/apprentice-intern/>
- FoodWork.ca
<https://www.foodwork.ca/search> (search under 'Job Type' for internships)

Organic Farming - education/training

- Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada: Noncredit courses in organic farming
<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/agriculture/oacc/en-home/education.html>
- Gaia College, organic land care
<https://www.gaiacollege.ca/>
- WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms – WOOF
<https://wwof.ca/en/>

- Stewards of Irreplaceable Lands (SOILS)
<https://www.soilapprenticeships.com/apprenticeship-opportunities/>
farms which emphasis organic techniques with little or no dependence on pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides.
- The Bee School
<https://thebeeschool.wordpress.com/>

Pesticide Certification

Some farmers and fruit & vegetable growers spray their crops with pesticides to protect them from damage. In B.C., you must first obtain approved training and pass the requirements for Pesticide Certification before you can purchase or apply restricted class pesticides.

For information on ***Pesticide Certification & Training***, see:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/pesticides-pest-management/certification-training>

6. How Do I Find A Job?

Where would I work?

- *General farm workers are employed on crop, livestock, fruit, vegetable and specialty farms*

Finding Advertised Jobs

Jobs are advertised in a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines and online job sites.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun & the Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **AG Careers**
https://www.agcareers.com/british_columbia-jobs.cfm
- **BC Cherry Association**
<https://www.bccherry.com/employment-directory/>
- **BC Fruit Growers' Association**
<https://www.bcfga.com/188/Farm+Jobs>
- **BC Farm, Fish & Food Job Connector**
<https://bcagjobs.gov.bc.ca/>
- **Foodworks.ca: Local & Sustainable Food Jobs**
<https://www.foodwork.ca/jobs.php?prov=BC>
- **Organic BC – Job Board**
<https://organicbc.org/job-board/>
- **Young Agrarians**
<https://youngagrarians.org/farm-jobs/>
- **Indeed.ca**
https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
- **WorkBC**
<https://www.workbc.ca/search-and-prepare-job/find-jobs#/job-search>

Finding “Hidden Jobs”

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below will help you *with finding jobs in this “hidden” job market.*

Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of employers who are in this industry. Contact them directly to find out if they’re hiring.

- **BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) – List of Member Associations**
<https://bcac.ca/about-us/members/>
Approximately 30 member organizations listed from blueberry producers to egg producers, to turkey growers. Click links for each association’s website to see if individual producers are listed.

- **BC Fresh** – associations
<https://bcfresh.ca/associations/>
- **Organic BC – Directory**
<https://organicbc.org/findorganic/>
- **Reference Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "FARM" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings (e.g. "farm produce"). Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library

NOTE: You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).

Networking, Volunteering and Temporary Agencies

Many positions are filled by people who have been recommended by someone they know. Networking, working as a volunteer or registering with a temporary employment agency are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

Networking and the Hidden Job Market:

When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.

Volunteer opportunities

- **Volunteer BC**
<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>
- **GoVolunteer.ca**
<https://govolunteer.ca/>
- **Happy Herd Farm Sanctuary**
<https://happyherd.org/volunteer/>
- **Foodwork.ca** (local & sustainable food volunteer jobs)
<https://www.foodwork.ca/volunteer>
- **UBC Farm - Centre for Sustainable Food Systems**
<https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/volunteer-program/>
- **Maplewood Farm** (North Vancouver)
<https://maplewoodfarm.bc.ca/about-us/volunteer/>
- **Sharing Farm Society** (Richmond)
<https://www.sharingfarm.ca/volunteer/>
- **4-H British Columbia** – agriculture based youth development program
<https://www.4hbc.ca/volunteering?highlight=volunteer>

For additional tips see:

- **Networking for Employment**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience.

Use the library catalogue <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

For more information see:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

8. Where Can This Job Lead?

Progression to supervisory positions or to farm manager is possible with experience.

9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **AGRI Talent, Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council**

<https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/programs/agri-talent>

- **Farmfolk Cityfolk**

<https://farmfolkcityfolk.ca/>

nonprofit society that works to cultivate a local, sustainable food system

- **BC Agriculture Council (BCAC)**

<https://bcac.ca/>

BC Agriculture Council represents over 14,000 BC farmers and ranchers and close to thirty farm sector associations from all regions of the province

- **BC Vegetable Marketing Commission**

<https://www.bcveg.com/>

- **Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada**

<https://fvgc.ca/>

- **Organic BC**

<https://organicbc.org/>

- **United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW Canada)**

https://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=2&lang=en

Union supporting agricultural workers' rights

- **BC Employment Standards for Farm Workers**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/hiring/farm-workers>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.