

Fastest Growing Industries: Agrifoods

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Overview of the Agrifoods Industry

Introduction

The British Columbia agrifoods sector is made up of several industries: agriculture, seafood, and food and beverage processing. In total the sector employs more than 80,000 people.

- The agricultural sector employs over 46,000 people who work on nearly 20,000 B.C. farms
- Food and beverage processing companies employ over 36,000 people who work in more than 2,500 businesses that produce a variety of foods and beverages

Farmers, greenhouse owners, egg producers, dairy managers, bakery owners, meat and seafood product manufacturers all report difficulties finding workers!

Studies report that hiring and retaining workers has become a serious issue for employers. Many positions will require filling in the coming years. By 2029, the number of agricultural jobs at risk of going unfilled will reach 15,200, a number that's equivalent to one in three jobs.

The demand for workers covers the full range of the workforce:

- Seasonal workers
- Technicians

- Trades people
- Managers and supervisors

The industry is losing a great number of its workforce due to retirement. It is projected 33% of BC's agricultural workforce will retire by 2029. A similar number of workers in the food and beverage industry are expected to retire over the same period.

These industries rely heavily on foreign workers. Close to 23% of the Province's agricultural workers are foreign.

The industry has responded by developing a number of programs to attract new workers. These include initiatives to attract you to the sector, corporate efforts to encourage diversity in the workplace and strategies for training.

One such initiative is **FAST (Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent)**. FAST offers skilled immigrants a set of free online services and resources to help you find work in Canada.

- More information:
<https://fastcanada.ca/>

The **BC Provincial Nominee Program's (PNP) Skills Immigration** stream is intended for you if you would like to live and work in B.C. and become a permanent resident of Canada.

- More information:
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/B-C-Provincial-Nominee-Program>
- Programs are also available if you are interested in starting your own farming business:
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/Entrepreneur-Immigration>

For more information on the Agrifoods sector see:

- **WorkBC Industry Profile. Agriculture**
Includes Industry Overview, Labour Market Statistics, and Resources
<https://www.workbc.ca/industry-profile/agriculture-and-fishing>

- **Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council**
<https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/>

- **BC Food and Beverage Manufacturing and Processing Sector Labour Market Partnership**
<https://manufacturingbc.org/research/bc-food-and-beverage-sector-lmp/>

- **Trade & Invest BC. Agrifood**
<https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/search/agrifood>

2. Occupations in the Agrifoods Sector

Agriculture:

The largest occupations in the agricultural sector include:

- *Farmers and farm managers:* You manage the operations of a farm such as growing crops, raising livestock and poultry, and marketing farm products
- *General farm workers:* You plant, cultivate, and harvest crops, raise livestock and poultry, and maintain farm equipment and buildings
- *Nursery and greenhouse workers:* You plant, cultivate, and harvest trees, flowers, and plants, and serve nursery and greenhouse customers
- *Harvesting labourers:* You assist other farm workers to harvest, sort and pack crops
- *Landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers*

The list below shows the range of jobs included in the agricultural sector:

Number of workers by occupation: BC Agriculture

Occupations	Number of workers 2019
Farmers and farm managers	11,700
Agricultural and related service contractors and specialists	380
Farm supervisors and specialized livestock workers	1,130
Managers in horticulture	810
Landscaping and grounds maintenance contractors and managers	3,760
Landscape and horticulture technicians and specialists	860
Managers in aquaculture	360
General farm workers	6,570
Nursery and greenhouse workers	2,560
Harvesting labourers	1,230
Landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers	18,150
Aquaculture and marine harvest labourers	350

Source: BC Labour Market Outlook 2019

Food Processing:

Top categories in terms of employment include:

- *Labourers in food and beverage processing:* You perform clean-up, packaging, and other basic activities related to food and beverage processing.
- *Process control and machine operators:* You operate machinery to process and package food and beverage products
- *Supervisors, food and beverage processing*

The table below shows occupations found in the food and beverage processing sector:

Number of workers by occupation: BC Food & Beverage Processing

Occupations	Number of workers 2019
Supervisors, food and beverage processing	1,670
Agricultural and fish products inspectors	640
Process control and machine operators, food & beverage	4,190
Industrial butchers and meat cutters and poultry preparers	1,490
Fish plant workers	1,240
Testers and graders, food and beverage processing	570
Labourers in food and beverage processing	8,590
Labourers in fish processing	1,020

Source: BC Labour Market Outlook 2019

For detailed information on any of the occupations in the agricultural and food processor sectors, including job description, educational requirements for working in BC, salary, and more see:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles**
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search by job title]
- **BC Farm, Fish and Food Job Connector**
<https://bcagjobs.gov.bc.ca/job-opportunities/>
- **BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. Careers in Agriculture**
<https://www.bcaitc.ca/resources/careers-agriculture>

3. Hiring Forecast by Region

Most employment is in the Mainland/Southwest region of BC, which includes the Greater Vancouver area:

- *62% of all agricultural employees work in this region*
- *80% of all food processing employees work in this region*

Vancouver Island/Coast employs the second largest share of workers (17%) in the agricultural industry. Thompson-Okanagan is the third largest region of employment, with 9.6% of agricultural workers.

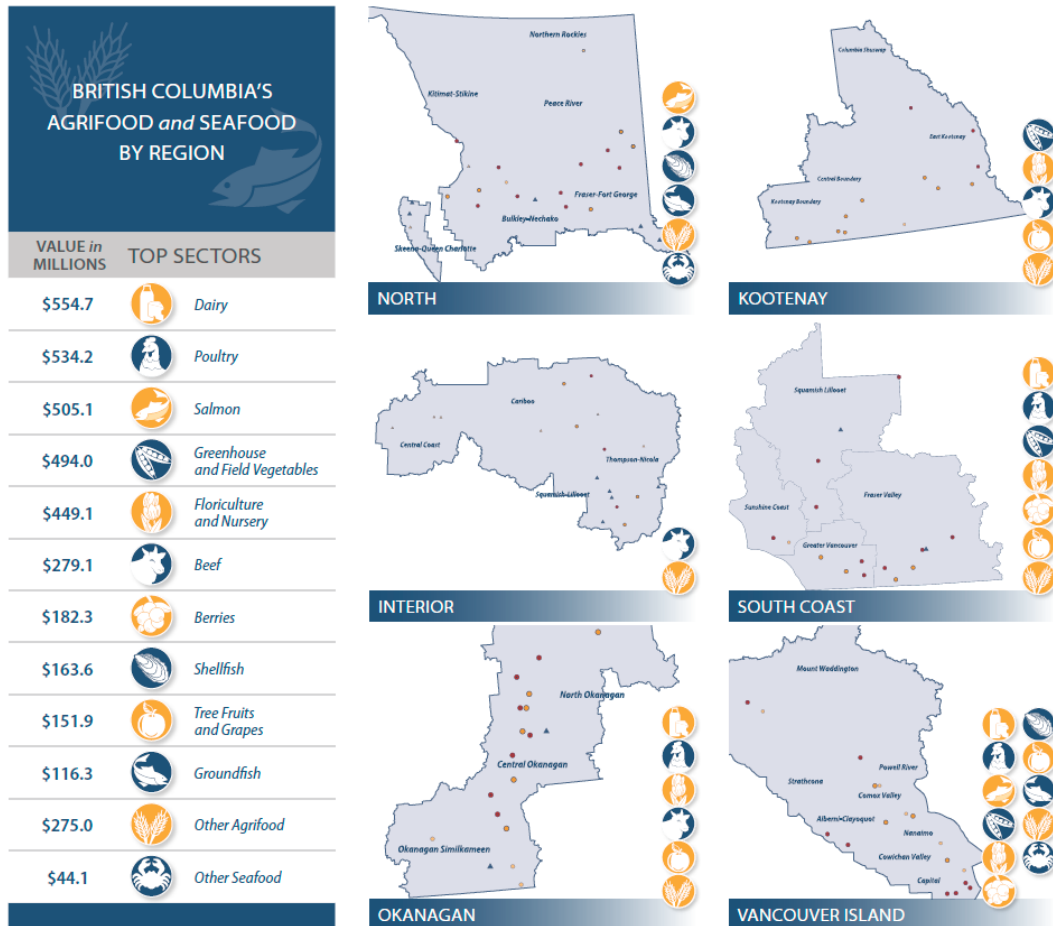


Chart from BC Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan [2015]

Information on agrifood activities in specific regions can be found at:

- **Agricultural Regions. British Columbia**
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/agricultural-regions>
- **Fraser Valley Regional District**
<https://www.fvrd.ca/EN/main/about-the-fvrd/projects-initiatives/agriculture.html>
- **Comox Valley (Vancouver Island)**
<https://discovercomoxvalley.com/food-drink/>
- **Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission**
<https://www.investkelowna.com/how-we-help/market-development/industry-and-economic-profiles/agriculture-viticulture/>
- **Pemberton Agriculture and Food**
<https://www.pembertonchamber.com/pemberton/economic-development/natural-resources/agriculture-and-food/>

For more information see:

- **Grow BC. The Regions**
<https://www.bcaitc.ca/agricultural-regions-contacts-and-careers>

4. Finding Jobs

Online Job Postings

- **Indeed.com**
<https://ca.indeed.com/>

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of employers in the agrifoods industry in British Columbia. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **BC Farm Fresh Local Farms**
<https://www.bcfarmfresh.com/farms/>
- **Certified Organic Growers Association of BC – Find Enterprises**
<https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/>

5. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Try looking at the following resources:

- **Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants Program**

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-in-B-C/Career-Paths-for-Skilled-Immigrants>

- **Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council**

<https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/>

- **Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia**

<https://iecbc.ca/>

- **Agriculture and Seafood. Government of BC**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood>

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/>.