

COVID-19 Labour Shortage Key Messages

Foreign Labour:

- In Nova Scotia the 2019 season brought in 1,500 seasonal agriculture workers.
- With the border closing to all but Canadian citizens and permanent residents, there are significant concerns about access to farm labour for the 2020 growing season.
- Workers coming in through the Temporary Foreign Worker and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programs support essential services.
- Workers coming in through the Temporary Foreign Worker and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programs are a skilled workforce.
- Every year Nova Scotia farms welcome temporary workers from countries such as, Jamaica, Cuba, Mexico and many others. These workers are vital to farming operations here in Nova Scotia where the local labour is unable to support the industry.
- Not only does this worker program support farmers, it is also a tremendous asset to the workers who are able to provide financial support to their families back home.
- The inability to access workers for the 2020 growing season will impact our ability to produce local food.

What NSFA is doing:

- NSFA is in communication with key stakeholders including commodity groups and county federations to assess the impact COVID-19 has on farmers in Nova Scotia.
- NSFA is in communication with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and is receiving regular updates on their efforts.
- NSFA is cancelling all in-person activities (meetings, workshops, farm visits etc.) until April 3rd – we will reassess at a later date.

What CFA is doing:

- CFA created a coronavirus resource webpage for all members and farmers.
- CFA is part of an ESDC Emergency Preparedness Committee that had its first call Monday, March 16 focusing on what needs to be done to ensure farmers have access to predictable and timely farm labour for the upcoming planting season.

- The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has created a Roundtable of industry leaders, including the CFA, to discuss the impacts this situation is having on the sector in terms of the food supply chain.
 - Includes representation from: CFA, Grains & Oilseeds, Cattle & Pork, Dairy, Chicken, Turkey, Horticulture, Aquaculture and Processors

Other points:

- Ensuring that Nova Scotians have access to healthy and safe food should be a main priority for government. Canada has a secure food supply; we encourage consumers not to panic buy.
- According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, extensive research has been conducted on the transmission of COVID-19 through food consumption and there is absolutely **no evidence** of this.
- NSFA is in regular contact with Honourable Minister Colwell here in Nova Scotia and Kody Blois, Member of Parliament for Kings – Hants, Member of Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.