

Fastest Growing Industries: Agrifoods

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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Contents

1. Overview of the Agrifoods Industry	2
2. Occupations in the Agrifoods Sector	5
3. Hiring Forecast by Region	7
4. Finding Jobs	9
5. Additional Resources.....	10

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 55,000 people.

- The agricultural sector employs over 38,000 people who work on nearly 20,000 B.C. farms
- Food and beverage processing companies employ over 28,000 people who work in more than 1,800 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.

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 was projected that 40% of BC's farmers and farm managers will retire between 2005 and 2015. About 25% of the workers in the food and beverage industry are expected to retire over the same period. With this aging workforce, the industry is at a critical point where it must attract and retain new employees.

Newcomers to Canada are seen as a key source of talent as agrifood companies seek to meet their hiring needs in the years ahead.

Recent immigrants represent:

- *46% of the workforce in BC food and processing companies*
- *39% of the workforce on BC farms*

Source: http://www.mussioassociates.com/PDF_files/Agri-Food%20HR%20plan-09.pdf

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 the ***ITA's Immigrants in Trades Training*** program. Programs offered through this initiative provide you with hands-on experience, financial assistance, safety training, English courses, and career counselling.

- More information:
<http://www.itabc.ca/immigrants-trades/overview>

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.

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- More information:
<http://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate/About-the-BC-PNP.aspx>
- Programs are also available if you are interested in starting your own farming business:
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/BC-PNP-Entrepreneur-Immigration>

For more information on the Agrifoods sector see:

- **WorkBC Industry Profile. Agriculture**
<http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Industry-Profiles/2>
- **BC Jobs Plan. Agrifoods**
<http://engage.gov.bc.ca/bcjobsplan/economy/agrifoods/>
- **BC Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan**
<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/strategic-growth-plan.pdf>
- **Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council**
<http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/>
- **British Columbia Agri-Food Human Resources Action Plan**
http://www.mussioassociates.com/PDF_files/Agri-Food%20HR%20plan-09.pdf

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 2015
Farmers and farm managers	10,190
Agricultural and related service contractors and managers	40
Farm supervisors and specialized livestock workers	850
Nursery and greenhouse operators and managers	770
Landscaping and grounds maintenance contractors and managers	1,480
Supervisors, landscape and horticulture	1,460
Aquaculture operators and managers	270
General farm workers	9,140
Nursery and greenhouse workers	4,620
Harvesting labourers	3,930
Landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers	20,330
Aquaculture and marine harvest labourers	410

Source: Regional Employment Projections, BC Stats. Projections for development regions

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
- *Fish plant workers*

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 2015
Supervisors, food and beverage processing	900
Agricultural and fish products inspectors	600
Process control and machine operators, food & beverage	2,850
Industrial butchers and meat cutters and poultry preparers	1,370
Fish plant workers	2,200
Testers and graders, food and beverage processing	710
Labourers in food and beverage processing	8,120
Labourers in fish processing	1,360

Source: Regional Employment Projections, BC Stats. Projections for development regions

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**
<http://www.workbc.ca/> [search by job title]
- **BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. Career Opportunities**
<http://www.aitc.ca/bc/index.php?page=career-opportunities>

3. Hiring Forecast by Region

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

- *49% of all agricultural employees work in this region*
- *55% of all food processing firms are in the Lower Mainland*

Thompson-Okanagan employs the second largest share of workers (23%) in the agricultural industry. Vancouver Island/Coast is the third largest region of employment, with 14% of agricultural workers.

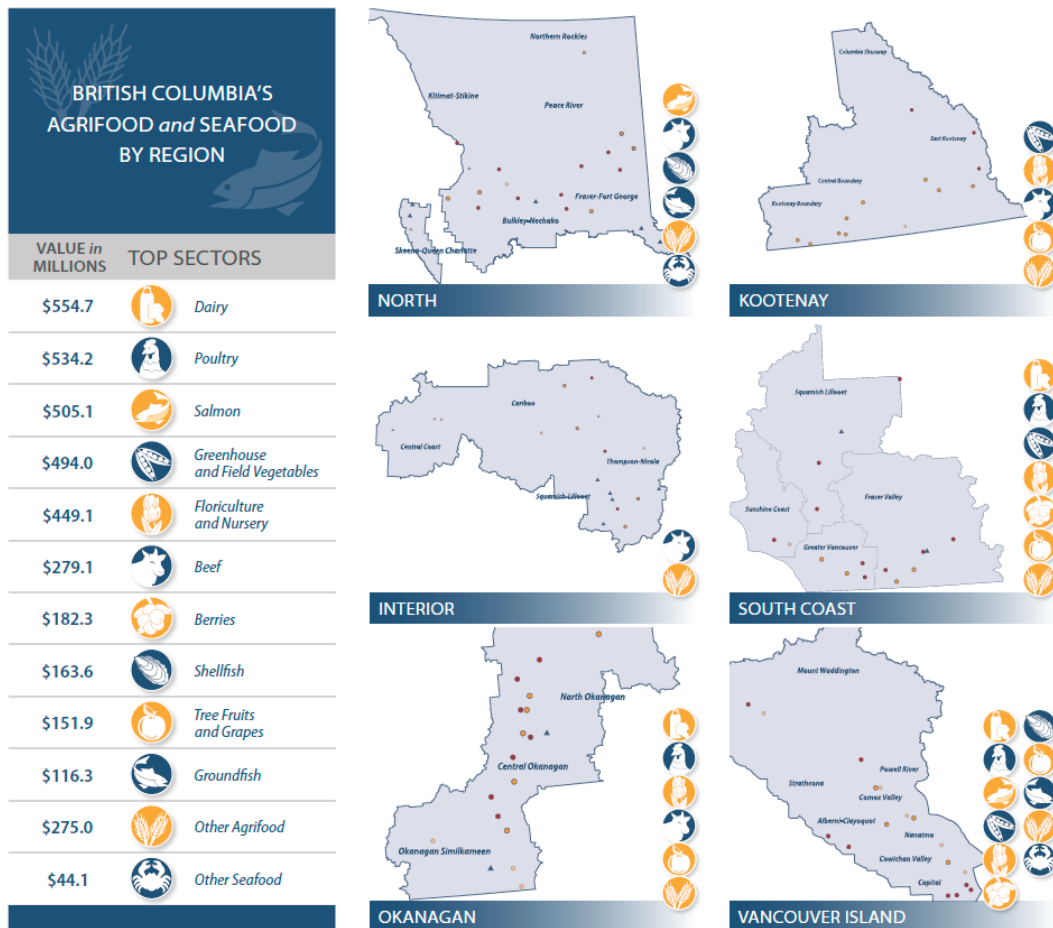


Chart from BC Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan

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

- **Agricultural Regions. British Columbia**
<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-regions>
- **Agricultural Economy in the Fraser Valley Region**
<http://www.fvrd.ca/assets/Government/Documents/AgricultureSnapshot.pdf>
- **Northeast BC**
<http://www.investnortheastbc.ca/sectors/agriculture>
- **Comox Valley (Vancouver Island)**
<http://www.agrifoodcomoxvalley.com/>
- **Kamloops/Thompson River Basin**
<http://venturekamloops.com/industries/agriculture/>
- **Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission**
<http://www.investkelowna.com/resources>
Look under "Resource Documents: Agriculture"

For more information see:

- **Grow BC. The Regions**
http://www.aitc.ca/bc/uploads/growbc/GrowBC_2014_Regions.pdf

4. Finding Jobs

Online Job Postings

- **Agricultural Labour Pool**
<http://www.agri-labourpool.com/jobpostings.aspx>
- **BC Food Processors Association Jobs**
<http://www.bcfpa.ca/marketplace>
- **Indeed.com**
<http://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**
<http://www.bcfarmfresh.com/farms/>
- **BC Food Processors Association Directory**
<http://www.contactcanada.com/guides/bcfood/>
- **Certified Organic Growers Association of BC – Find Enterprises**
<http://www.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-or-Study-in-B-C/Work-in-B-C/Employment-Language-Programs>
- **Welcome BC. Job Profiles for Immigrants**
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-or-Study-in-B-C/Job-profiles-for-immigrants>
- **Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council**
<http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca/>
- **Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia**
<http://www.iecbc.ca/>

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 <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.