

BC Fruit Growers' Association

Friday File



March 18, 2020

COVID-confusion

On again, Off again...

The prohibition on entry of people started on Wednesday, March 18, with an exception for US citizens (the prohibition was extended to visitors and tourists from the US on Tuesday, March 17). The travel restrictions directly impact the Temporary Foreign Worker Programs for Agriculture by preventing SAWP and TFWP-Ag Stream workers from entering Canada.

1. Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, approximately 8,500 workers come to BC annually.
2. TFW - Ag Stream Program, similar to SAWP, but allowing entry from any country. Numbers of agricultural workers on this program are uncertain, but there are probably 2,000 workers in this category (mushroom farms and greenhouses are the largest users of this program).
3. TFW - Low Skill Program, primarily used by processors, such as the meat processing industry. This program has less importance in BC, but is critical in Alberta.
4. International Experience Canada Program (also known as the backpacker program) allows youth to visit Canada and work. For BC, the number of backpackers could amount to 1,500 workers, mainly in the Okanagan and excluding the youth that come from Quebec. Quebec youth could add another 1,500 workers that may not show up this season, just due to decreased willingness to travel.

Today, the agriculture sector was initially elated to hear Public Safety Minister Bill Blair announce that Temporary Foreign Workers were not included in the travel ban. However, elation turned to confusion when a very senior Minister in the federal Cabinet clarified that the travel ban was lifted only for TFWs from the US. Here is more information on the confusion in [The Grower online](#).

The bad news is that industry is back to square one on the travel ban for SAWP and TFW-Ag Stream workers. The good news is that the CFA-CHC proposals are in front of the federal Cabinet. Government will be pressed hard for clarity on the TFW program and food security for Canada and to resolve the travel ban issue very quickly.

- Please direct all media inquiries to communications@bcac.ca
- Please send any questions to us at info@bcfga.com

A BCAC Labour Committee conference call was held today, and another conference call is scheduled for tomorrow.

Unfortunately, we do not yet have definitive answers to many questions. Watch this newsletter for future updates. [WALI](#) is also sending email updates to SAWP employers.

SAWP

Questions of the Week

With all of the confusion over the travel ban, should I delay submitting my LMIA?

No. Submit your LMIA on your schedule. If everyone delays submitting LMIAs, there will be a backlog when the travel ban is resolved and that will cause unnecessary delays in processing applications. Also, there were delays in processing Work Permits by the Canadian Consulate in Mexico earlier in this season, so it may be best to apply earlier than planned.

I have workers scheduled to arrive next week and the travel ban is still on, should I cancel the flights?

As things stand, it is probably best to cancel flights within the next week, but communicate with the Mexican consulate or Liaison Services first. For Mexico SAWP workers, email Arturo at MiTierra (arturo@mitierraholidays.com).

My SAWP workers are from Mexico. There seems to be some problem with SIMOL, the computer program used to schedule workers. What should I do?

SIMOL is not working properly and workers must be contacted directly about travel arrangements.

The information below is from the Consulate General of Mexico in Vancouver regarding SIMOL, Mexico's Ministry of Labour database for worker information.

Please be advised that due to technical difficulties, the database used by the Ministry of Labour in Mexico named SIMOL, to which some of you have access, may not reflect accurate information with regards flight itineraries, workers' visas or other data from your farm or the worker. Your patience while this issue is being resolved is greatly appreciated.

In the mid time, please communicate all information with regards to flight itineraries to your workers directly and to the Consulate and Mi Tierra Holidays. If you have any further concerns, comments or questions please write us an email using the following format and send it to sawpmobilityvan@sre.gob.mx.

Format for inquiries:

Farm:

Worker name:

Worker file number:

Situation:

The Ministry of Labour is already working to fix the issue and we are hoping it can be solved within the next two weeks.

If you require further assistance please contact sawpmobilityvan@sre.gob.mx or call 604-682-7617

My SAWP Workers are worried about COVID-19. What 'official' information can I provide to them?

The link below from Health BC is for preventive measures with regards to the novel COVID-19 Coronavirus in English, Punjabi and Spanish. Click on the appropriate language below and provide copies to staff:

[Punjabi.](#)
[Spanish.](#)
[English.](#)

AgriStability

Final, final reminder

AgriStability Program provides payments when *program margins* fall more than 30%.

If you are not enrolled for 2019 AgriStability, you are encouraged to consider and apply for 2020 AgriStability (especially with the Covid-19 risks to farm finances). [Deadline to apply for 2020 AgriStability is April 30, 2020](#) - phone 1-877-343-2767 to enroll.

If a grower is registered for the 2019 program, then an Interim Payment is possible. The application for Interim payment is a fairly simple form.

For AgriStability help, call 1-877-343-2767.

- General Information ([English](#), [Punjabi](#))
- [Enrolment Form](#)
- [Interim Payment Guide](#)
- [Interim Payment Application](#)

BCFGA Office

Covid-19 restrictions

We are temporarily closing access to the BCFGGA office during the Covid-19 emergency. Most of our staff are working from home. Please call (250-762-5226) or [email](#) us if you need to communicate with us. If necessary, we will arrange for in-person appointments, but prefer to assist BCFGGA members by telephone or email.



BCFGA Office:
250-762-5226
Toll free:
1-800-619-9022

- Brenda Jorde, Member Services and BC Tree Fruit Replant Program, part-time, Monday - Thursday, local 1.
- Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2.
- Sheila MacGregor, Accountant, part-time, local 3.
- Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, part-time, local 4.

BCFGA 2020 Board of Directors

Name	Name	Cell/Text
Pinder Dhaliwal - President	Oliver	250-490-7198
Peter Simonsen - VP	Naramata	250-488-0363
Ravinder Bains	Keremeos	250-499-0512
Sukhdeep (Deep) Brar	Summerland	250-462-5687
Avi Gill	Kelowna	778-990-9737
Sukhdev Goraya	Kelowna	250-859-1229
Talwinder Bassi	Oliver	250-485-7272
David Dobernigg	Vernon	250-550-8999

Meetings and Events - check the [BCFGA Calendar](#) on our website for more information

Date	Meeting	Details
6:30 - 9 pm April 8	Tree Fruit Production Guide annual review	Creston