



## Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Update

September 27, 2022

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For the TFISP Steering Committee

### Observations

1. The Pandemic created many challenges in 2020 and 2021 arrivals of TFWs
  - a. Working together, foreign and Canadian governments ensured the flow of workers faced as little disruption as possible.
  - b. The BC government provided a 2 week quarantine process for all TFW's (about 7,500 per year for Mexico and 1,500 per year for the Caribbean SAWP programs alone). Employers paid workers' salaries during this downtime.
  - c. The Western Agriculture Labour Initiative is the front-line in delivery of the program to BC. WALI transitioned in 2020 and 2021 by moving from one full-time employee to 3+ full time employees.
  - d. The arrivals were about 85-90% of desired levels. This compared favourably with program performance in other provinces.
2. The changes in Mexico government support for the program has diminished and added more responsibility to WALI.
  - a. The number of staff recruiting and communicating with potential workers is reduced.
  - b. An earthquake caused the main office of the Mexican Ministry of Labour to be closed permanently, and transition to new facilities including IT issues have complicated the delivery of the program.
  - c. The plan to modernize the Mexican government database (SIMOL) was canceled. A limited investment was made to ensure the old system remains compatible with current web browsers.
3. The Okanagan normally receives slightly less than half of the Mexico workers (about 3,500) and almost all of the Caribbean workers (about 1,500). The program is demand-driven. For growers who meet the terms of the program, the application for workers has a very high approval rate. However, some smaller growers are unable to participate - they cannot meet the minimum hours of employment or the transfer requirements are too restrictive.
4. In 2022, there was a partial crop failure in cherry and apples and the anticipated number of workers is expected to be down by 30% from normal.



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5. Apart from the Pandemic and Mexico government reduction in support, the program is considered mature, with a focus on streamlining existing systems.
6. Caribbean governments that are part of SAWP and several key governments sending workers through Ag Stream see these programs as critical in helping improve employment opportunities for residents and are committed to help grow the number of workers coming to Canada.
7. More farms in more commodities are using TFWs. Historically it was only the commodities needing a large number of workers over a short season that used the program. TFWs are now seen in almost every commodity sector.
8. Advocacy groups want all TFWs to have permanent residency rights and the option to immigrate immediately upon arrival to Canada. Another proposal of advocacy groups would move TFWs to an “open” work permit from an employer-specific work permit. The likelihood that workers (like Canadian residents) would migrate to urban areas and urban jobs. These two proposed changes would significantly change the viability of the SAWP and Ag Stream programs.

#### **Priorities of WALI in the TFW programs (status in blue)**

1. Engage qualified staff to implement improved communications. [Completed, with review as part of annual planning process.](#)
2. Automate the transactional items (LMIA approvals, worker placements, travel dates and payments). [Completed, with ongoing program modifications as identified.](#)
3. Digitize the house inspection form. [Testing underway with implementation planned for 2022.](#)
4. Increase grower communications (e.g. WALI has implemented alerts and info messages directly to employers). [Completed, with review as part of annual planning process.](#)
5. [Adjusting to greater numbers of workers in the TFW Ag Stream Program versus the TFW SAWP Program.](#)
6. Represent BC agricultural employer and sector interests in maintaining a viable SAWP and Ag Stream programs, by responding to proposals that would undermine the



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programs and supporting proposals that strengthen the programs. [October-December, annual processes in place.](#)

### **Priorities of the BCFGA in the TFW programs (status in blue)**

1. Continue assisting agriculture employers complete LMIA's using a Registered Canadian Immigration Consultant. [Annual process in place.](#)
2. Investigate and make a plan for a Pilot Program for Employer Groups in the TFW SAWP Program. [This work is on schedule and funded by the BCFGA. A work schedule was set out in a recent weekly TFISP report.](#)
3. Investigate and make a plan for a pilot program for a specialized Agricultural Work Permits - after entry by visiting backpackers (currently required to apply prior to entry, which is a barrier). [Communication plan initiated, detailed pilot program design underway for completion December 2022, proposed pilot 2024.](#)
4. Continue to support the provincial and national TFW annual review processes, by participating on WALI and in national negotiations, where approved by WALI. [October-December, annual processes in place.](#)
5. Continue to preferentially support the growth of the Caribbean SAWP Program. [Ongoing, with annual validation in BCFGA business plan.](#)
6. Represent Okanagan agricultural employer and sector interests in maintaining a viable SAWP and Ag Stream programs, by responding to proposals that would undermine the programs and supporting proposals that strengthen the programs. [Ongoing: active PR response plan, possible AgriCommunications project developed for 2023 BCFGA business plan, and ongoing BCFGA participation in and direction from](#)
  - [BCAC/WALI committee meetings,](#)
  - [FVGC \(formerly CHC\) Labour Committee meetings,](#)
  - [BCAC Interior Hort Sector meetings, and](#)
  - [BCFGA Labour Committee meetings, BCFGA Annual Convention](#)



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