



Employment for seasonal workers in Queensland during the COVID-19 pandemic

Everyone has a general obligation to keep themselves, their neighbours and the community safe from coronavirus (COVID-19). You must follow Queensland's Chief Health Officer's public health directions for COVID-19.

Working in Queensland

The Queensland Government has introduced new measures to help agribusiness and commercial fisheries access seasonal workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes ensure seasonal work can continue so Queensland's food supplies are secure while still meeting COVID-19 public health directions.

Queensland agribusiness and commercial fisheries rely on seasonal workers throughout the year, depending on when they plant, harvest or do maintenance. You are considered a seasonal worker if you travel to or within Queensland for work as it becomes available, often requiring you to move and stay in temporary accommodation. Seasonal workers can be people who have come from overseas to travel and work temporarily in Australia, or an Australian resident seeking seasonal work, either locally or across the country.

Your obligations as a seasonal worker

If you want to work in agribusiness or commercial fishing in Queensland during COVID-19, you must:

- observe the latest travel and health advice from the [Australian Government](#) and stay up to date on [border closures and visa information](#)
- comply with Queensland's state [border closures](#), travel restrictions and [self-quarantine requirements](#) in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to stay up-to-date on [health advice](#)
- not travel to or within Queensland without first obtaining employment and ensuring you have appropriate accommodation.
- provide a record of your previous work and residence in the last 14 days.

If you are currently interstate, to enter Queensland to begin work you will require the following documentation:

- a completed [Queensland border pass](#)
- a letter/email from your employer proving that you have secured work, including your start date and period of employment
- accommodation details proving you have accommodation organised in Queensland
- a record of your work and residence in the last 14 days.

If you have been in a declared [COVID-19 hotspot](#) at any time within the past 14 days, you will be required to [self-quarantine](#) at your own expense for 14 days on arrival prior to commencing work. You may choose to self-quarantine prior to entering Queensland, however you must provide documentation from the interstate health authority at the border crossing.

If you have travelled to Australia from overseas with the intention of seeking employment with an agribusiness or commercial fishing operator, you must have a valid temporary work visa such as:

- Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (**subclass 403**) Pacific Labour scheme stream
- Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (**subclass 403**) Seasonal Worker Program stream



- Working Holiday (**subclass 417**) visa
- Work and Holiday (**subclass 462**) visa
- Temporary Activity (**subclass 408**) visa in the Australian Government Endorsed Event (AGEE) stream.

Temporary visa holders are required to observe the latest travel and health advice from the [Australian Government](#).

Type of work currently available in Queensland's agribusinesses

Most of the opportunities for work in agribusiness will be seasonal or casual in nature. Unless it is explicitly discussed, there will be no obligation for ongoing employment.

Most of these opportunities will be located in the regional areas of Queensland and will most likely be manual in nature. You should be prepared to work outdoors. Roles available will be for both skilled and unskilled workers. Harvest work is seasonal and includes many different jobs like picking fruit and vegetables, working in packing sheds, canneries and other processing plants or factories, or pruning and planting. It can be physically hard work in outdoor conditions.

You will most likely be expected to relocate to regional areas for the purposes of obtaining seasonal or casual agricultural labour. Check with your employer if suitable temporary accommodation is available as a condition of employment.

How to apply for work

1. Prepare your resume. Ensure you have proof of all of your qualifications ready to go. At this time, employers are going to be inundated with applicants. You should do everything possible to make it easy to assess your application.
2. Check the information below to work out if you are a-skilled or unskilled worker to guide your job search.
3. Register with [Harvest Trail](#), Harvest Labour Services (HLS) to look for job vacancies that match your skills. It will also give you more information on how to look for and apply for vacant positions.
4. Do your research and ensure you have the right paperwork and visa in place to start work.
5. Continue to observe current government health advice.

You can also consider participating in an occupational health and safety training course to prepare for work in a manual environment.

If you are a Queensland resident, authorised to work in Australia and not currently working, or are seeking additional hours, you could consider registering with [Jobs Finder Queensland](#).

Skilled and unskilled workers

Knowing your skill level can make it easier for you to look for, and find, the right job.

Skilled workers

You are most likely a skilled worker if you have any of the following:

- forklift ticket
- truck licence
- experience driving agricultural machinery
- formal qualifications in agriculture, horticulture, or fisheries
- formal qualification in cooking or similar.



Depending on your experience, you may be eligible for roles such as:

- air-seeder operator
- boom-spray operator
- machinery operator
- stockperson
- truck driver
- forklift operator
- cook
- boat master
- meat process worker
- seafood process worker
- farmhand/worker.

Unskilled workers

If you don't possess a formal qualification related to agriculture, horticulture, or fisheries, you are most likely classified as an un-skilled worker. This isn't a bad thing — unskilled jobs make up a large portion of the seasonal agricultural, horticultural, and fisheries workforce.

Unskilled workers are most likely to find employment in roles such as:

- fruit/vegetable picker
- fruit/vegetable packer
- meat process worker
- deck hand
- cleaner
- vineyard worker
- farmhand/worker.

For more information about types of careers in this sector, check out [Rural Skills Australia](#).

Free opportunities to upskill

The Queensland Government has recently made a range of free training opportunities available for Queensland jobseekers and workers impacted by COVID-19 to gain accreditation in competencies, including in farm labouring. Find out more about [Isolearn](#) through TAFE.

Payment and wages

You will be entitled to be paid under the relevant State or Federal award. There is no change in this legislation due to the COVID-19 situation.

You can find more information at [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

Indicative salaries are available at the [Australian Government job outlook](#).

More information

The [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) offers guidance regarding sending workers home, leave entitlements and reduction of hours for employers paying under the Federal system.

[Harvest Labour Services](#) connect workers and employers.

Unite against COVID-19



The [Department of Home Affairs](#) provides updates for visa holders regarding conditions on their visa, rules regarding where they can work and who is allowed to enter Australia. This website also has advice on what visa holders should do if their visa is due to expire shortly.

[Services Australia](#) may be able to assist people who are left unemployed due to COVID-19.

Complaints relating to a business who are employing seasonal works (agribusiness, commercial fisheries, transport or accommodation) can be directed to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries DAFCOVID19Enquiries@daf.qld.gov.au.

For further information on arrangements to support the employment of temporary visa holders and seasonal workers in Queensland, visit covid19.qld.gov.au.

Last updated 1 May 2020

Disclaimer - While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.