

HORTICULTURE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

**PROPOSAL FOR PILOT OF
SEASONAL LABOUR FROM
THE PACIFIC**

AUGUST 2008



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
Horticulture Proposal on Seasonal Labour	4
Background	4
Issues	6
Proposal for a Pilot Program - Seasonal Labour from the Pacific	9
Design Principles/Guidelines for a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture	9
1. A Pacific region seasonal labour program for Australia should incorporate the circularity of the Canadian/NZ schemes (i.e. return of ‘satisfied/satisfactory’ workers in subsequent years).....	10
2. Relevant Australian Award wages and conditions (as a minimum, the default Federal Horticulture Award 2000) will apply, with Pacific workers entitled to the same rights and protections as their Australian-resident counterparts.....	11
3. Such a program should operate on a regional model, and ‘pair’ individual communities in Australia and the Pacific in ‘sister city’ style relationships; with links to wider community- and capacity-building and development goals.....	12
4. Mutual-responsibility, mutual benefit and cost-sharing must underpin contributions by all participants, and partner governments.....	13
5. Effective stakeholder Steering Committees and other mechanisms, at both the national and regional level, to ensure financially-viable and equitable outcomes for all participants.....	14
Management of a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture	16
Potential Regions for a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture	19
South Australia: <i>Virginia/Adelaide Plains</i>	19
NT: <i>Darwin/Katherine/Kununurra</i>	20
Queensland: Southern Queensland Region (Lockyer/Fassifern, Granite Belt, Eastern Darling Downs).....	26
Victoria: <i>Goulburn Valley/Cobram, Swan Hill/Robinvale</i>	31
NSW: <i>Tumut/Batlow, Orange, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, Far North Coast</i>	31

INTRODUCTION

Horticulture Australia Council (HAC) is the peak national industry body representing the Horticultural industries. Members of HAC are the national peak industry bodies (PIBs) for the Horticultural industries, and some State farmer organisations. Horticulture Australia Council (HAC) represents over 97% of the Australian horticulture industry, and its Member organisations include:

- Apple & Pear Australia
- Agricultural Investment Managers Australia
- Avocados Australia
- Australian Banana Growers' Council
- Australian Citrus Growers
- Australian Custard Apple Growers
- Australian Dried Fruit Association
- Australian Mushroom Growers Association
- Australian Nut Industry Council
- Australian Passionfruit Industry Association
- Ausveg
- Cherry Growers of Australia
- Growcom
- NSW Farmers' Association
- Nursery and Garden Industry Australia
- Persimmon Industry Association
- Strawberries Australia
- Turf Producers Australia

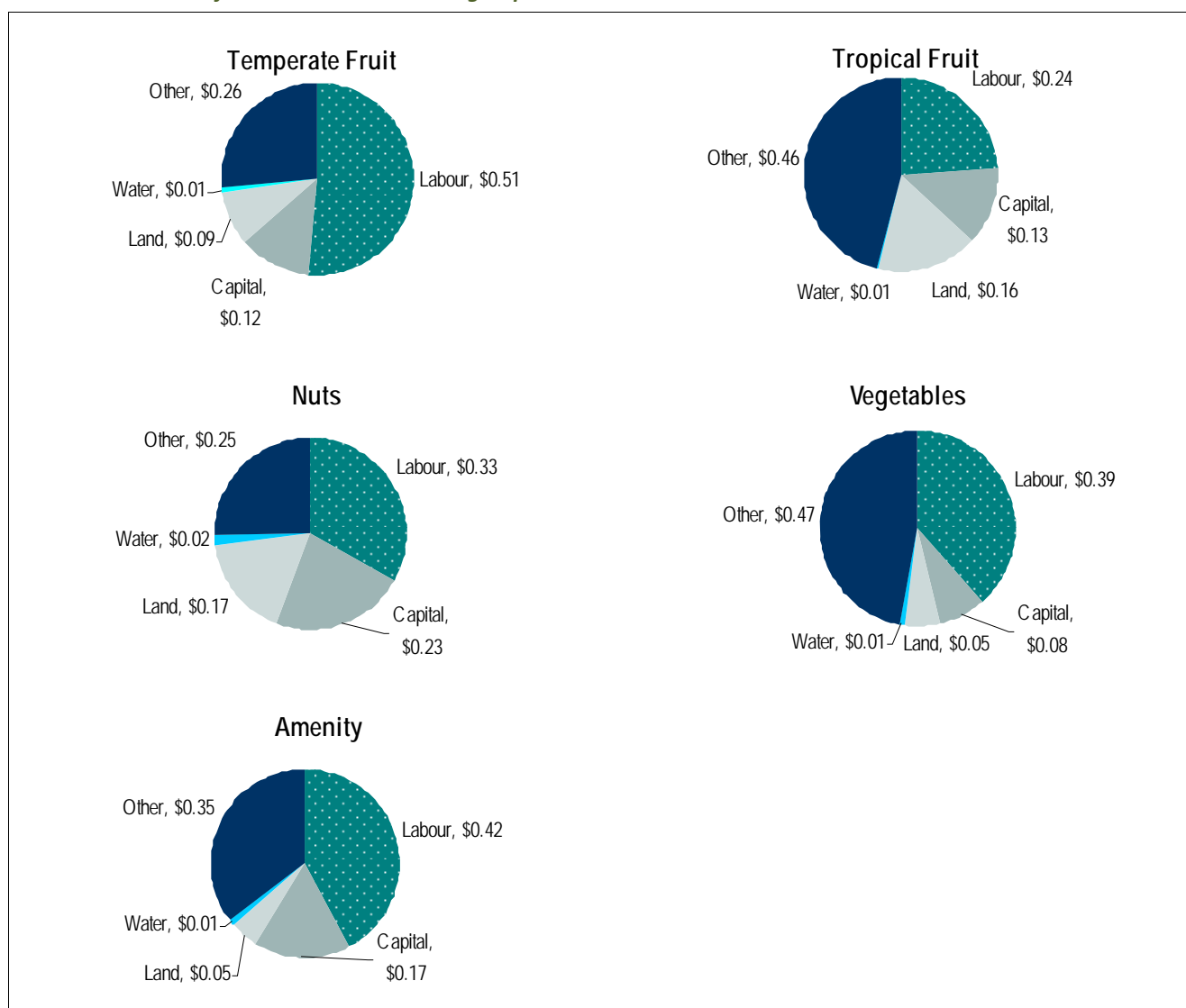
Horticulture in Australia is intensive, generally irrigated, agriculture. Horticulture is a diverse industry, spread across the continent in a wide array of climates. Horticulture is the fastest growing industry in agriculture; with 25,00-30,000 businesses nationally, and a farm gate value of \$8 billion. Total horticultural exports in 2006/07 were \$763 million. As the most labour intensive of all agricultural industries, Horticulture employs approximately one-third of those employed in agriculture. The industry is the principal driver of many regions and local communities and economies in rural and regional Australia.

Horticulture Proposal on Seasonal Labour

Background

- ❖ There is considerable uncertainty as to the number of persons employed in the horticultural industry. Estimates of employment vary widely, and there is little reliable data collected by governments on the sector's workforce. The development of better statistics about employment in the industry is being afforded strong priority by the industry, since labour is a major input into the production process; and work is currently underway.
- ❖ **Labour contributes up to approximately 50% (depending on the industry) of the costs of production in horticulture.** Different horticultural industries need different mixes of resource inputs. The best way to express this is the share of total cost each resource input comprises. For example with temperate fruit, each dollar of output involves labour costs of 51 cents; for nuts, labour costs are 33 cents. Most measures significantly understate water costs, because the latest available data for a base year is 2005-06, which is before water prices rose significantly (chart 1).

1 Cost structures for selected horticultural groups 2005-06



Data source: HI-link model, developed by CIE for HAL.

- ❖ Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) estimates that, in 2005 17,273 enterprises in horticulture employed a total of 64,000 people, which corresponds to 20 per cent of the total employment in agriculture. However, these figures understate the total labour requirement of the industry as they relate only to full time employees and do not include full time equivalents (FTE) of casual or seasonal labour. Other data places the number of business enterprises in horticulture at over 25,000 and permanent employees at over 100,000.
 - The NFF data estimates that the agricultural sector as a whole has a labourforce deficit of 80,000 – 100,000 from job losses alone since 2000¹, principally as a result of unprecedented drought events;
- ❖ Despite this, there is good evidence that employment in the sector has grown strongly over the past fifteen years and will in all likelihood continue to grow. Between 1991 and 2001, there was a large increase in the number of persons employed in the sector. The number of workers rose by over 40% while the number of farm business units fell by 10 percent². This indicates a large increase in the average employment per farm business. Of these workers, 60% were wage and salary workers and 20 percent were self employed workers (AFI 2005).
 - Growth in employment levels required in agriculture generally is estimated at 36%³, with the highest growth in Horticulture at 18.1% (present - 2011-12)⁴.
- ❖ The 2005 HAL figures imply an average permanent workforce of 3.7 workers per enterprise⁵.
 - Growcom survey data for Queensland⁶ indicate a much higher average employment rate of 5.45 permanent employees per enterprise.
- ❖ The diversity and fragmentation of the industry (both according to crop and region), the seasonal nature of production and employment, and the high reliance on itinerant and backpacker labour complicates the estimation of the size of the labour force.
 - There are also numbers of predominantly seasonal workers who do not have a right to work or who disguise their employment for immigration, taxation and welfare benefit reasons.

Current Sources of Seasonal Labour

- ❖ Present sources of harvest labour include:
 - *family or local part-timers*
 - these numbers are declining
 - *itinerant workers*
 - these numbers are also falling
 - *backpackers, vacationing students and “grey nomads”*
 - these are seen as reasonably effective and efficient but will never fully meet the demand , and can be unreliable
 - *Work for the Dole*
 - are generally regarded unfavourably by growers, as willingness to work can be an issue.

¹ NFF Workforce from Abroad Employment Scheme, April 2008

² HAL.

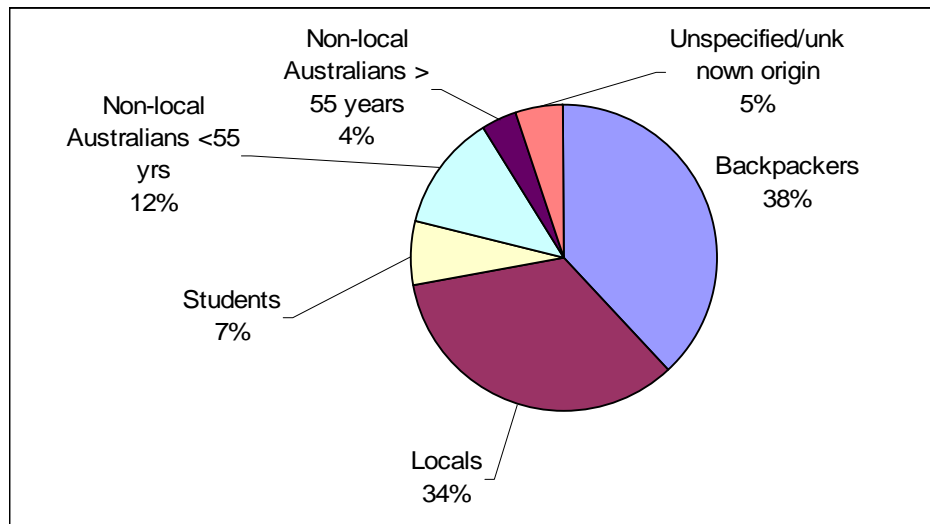
³ Faculty of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, University of Sydney, 2007

⁴ ABS Labour Force Survey & DEWR projections

⁵ HAL is currently undertaking bench-marking research in this area to assist with providing more accurate data (2006-07).

⁶ HAL, 2005

Sources of seasonal labour



Issues

- ❖ There is a severe and growing labour shortage in the Australian agricultural sector. This shortage is acute in the Australian horticultural industry. The industry requires access to additional seasonal labour.
 - The ongoing shortfall in seasonal (and particularly harvest) labour is unlikely to be met from existing sources.
- ❖ Despite the challenges facing it, the horticulture industry has experienced strong growth over the past decade. According to Mares (2005), throughout the 1990s growth in the Sunraysia, Victoria, region significantly outstripped the national average (4.3% per annum versus 3.0% per annum) with the value of agricultural production rising 55% between 1997 and 2001. Similar growth has been experienced in the Central Murray region. Other regions (eg Bundaberg, the Atherton Tablelands and the Sunshine Coast in Queensland) have also experienced strong growth.
- ❖ The inadequacies of national data on industry employment requirements and the absence of aggregated vacancy data mean that it is difficult to systematically document the labour shortage issues in rural Australia. This includes the timing and regional pattern of shortages. As a result, it is difficult to assess the extent of the increase in labour supply (from seasonal immigration of labour and other sources) that might be required to meet growers' needs.
 - A bench-marking survey of the industry is currently being undertaken by HAL's Across-Industry Program (through the Australian Farm Institute) to provide critical information about labour and skills issues; including the nature, extent and causes of the seasonal labour shortage.
 - Growcom (Queensland's peak horticulture organization) has recently completed a project to combat labour shortages in the horticulture industry, and to develop Australia's first strategic horticulture industry workforce plan. The study looked at labour and skills shortages, and issues/challenges that impact on the industry's workforce.

- ❖ Both Commonwealth and State governments have placed a high priority on the skill shortage issue in rural and regional Australia, and have introduced a number of measures to address the problem. In the case of horticulture, labour supply constraints have been eased somewhat by the introduction of stronger incentives for backpackers from overseas to seek seasonal employment.⁷ However, substantial shortages remain, particular for seasonal workers; and this situation has recently been exacerbated by the mining boom (particularly in WA, where even un- or semi-skilled workers are being offered incentives that the rest of business is unable to match).
- ❖ Seasonal, and even permanent, labour shortages have afflicted the horticulture industry for some time. The Report of the National Harvest Trail Working Group of June 2000 highlighted the extent of the problem more than eight years ago; subsequent growth in the industry has simply exacerbated the problem.
 - According to the Report, growers, harvest offices and Job Network providers indicated that they could not obtain sufficient labour to bring in the harvest and to undertake other seasonal horticultural activities at critical times.
- ❖ Horticulture needs access to effective, timely labour sources, especially at harvest-time. There are many cases of produce left in the field (or producing poor returns because no longer of the specified size/quality) because there was no-one to harvest it. The loss of markets — domestic or export — is a serious consequence. In the longer term, ready access to labour will drive investment decisions and lack of it will inhibit those decisions.
 - Mechanisation of horticultural processes has made progress in some crops suited to it, but will never be the answer for other crops.
- ❖ **Most grower groups report experiencing some shortages of labour. Equally as important, there was widespread general uncertainty among growers that workers would be available in the numbers and at the times required.**
- ❖ For a number of reasons, the labour shortage situation may well have intensified since that time. Factors contributing to the shortage include:
 - Competition for available labour from other sectors of the economy, such as the mining, tourism and restaurant industries that have experienced strong growth over the past five years;
 - The impact of the drought which resulted in many locals re-locating to larger towns and cities in search of employment, adding to the long trend of rural de-population; and
 - Growth in the horticultural sector over the past five years that has resulted in strong growth in demand for available labour supplies.
- ❖ Unless the shortfall in seasonal workers is effectively addressed, our industry will not realize its full potential. Production will plateau and export opportunities remain unrealized. Investment will not reach its full potential.
- ❖ If horticulture does not have an environment that encourages ongoing investment, then we will begin to lag behind productivity improvements made in other countries and existing export and domestic markets will be further eroded; we risk a downward spiral that would be very difficult to reverse.

⁷ The attraction of farm work for backpackers would improve significantly if income tax rates imposed on backpackers (29%), were equalized with that paid by Australian seasonal workers (13%).

- ❖ A variety of initiatives are proposed to address this significant inhibitor for Horticulture, including:
 - The attraction of farm work for backpackers would improve significantly if income tax rates imposed on backpackers (29%) were harmonised with those paid by Australian seasonal workers (13%).
 - A review of the current “unskilled” categorization for horticulture in relation to the skilled migration program
 - Even seasonal harvest labour in Horticulture is ‘farm-skilled’; other activities (thinning, pruning, sorting/grading, packing, etc are more skilled).
 - Active partnership with industry to ensure that the best practices of the National Harvest Labour Information Service are rolled-out nationally; including:
 - Adequate resourcing for the Service; and
 - Full implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the National Harvest Trail Working Group.
 - A Pacific Island Seasonal Labour scheme.

Proposal for a Pilot Program - Seasonal Labour from the Pacific

Horticulture is proposing that one of a suite of potential solutions to this issue is to undertake a trial of seasonal labour from abroad – specifically, in partnership with our nearest neighbours in the Pacific.

- ❖ Many observers (including the World Bank⁸) have commended the concept of a seasonal worker scheme based on temporary supply of labour from the Asia-Pacific regions.
 - Their support has been based in some cases on issues beyond the horticultural industry's labour shortage problem (eg the benefits of direct aid, in the form of remittances, to the sending country; or addressing significant youth unemployment in the sending countries).
 - Horticulture considers these potential benefits to both the sending and receiving countries, as part of 'Win-Win' outcomes from such a scheme, to be significant additional benefits.
- ❖ Many countries have schemes to bring in temporary workers to meet seasonal needs (the Canadian and NZ schemes, for example, provide valuable information on the development of a suitable model for the Australian situation).
- ❖ The Pacific Island Leaders Forum has called for such a scheme for many years, to assist with development goals.



Design Principles/Guidelines for a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture

HAC envisages a national pilot program run in major horticultural regions which have identified seasonal labour shortages. It is proposed that the full pilot would run for three years, with an interim evaluation 18 months into the pilot, with ongoing monitoring at both the regional and national level; and a full evaluation towards the end of the third year. This would allow for the initial evaluation to be undertaken after at least one return visit by workers in each intake, and as circularity is a key principle in our proposal, we see it as critical that the effectiveness of the pilot program has a chance to be improved and issues addressed.

⁸ *At Home & Away: expanding job opportunities for Pacific Islanders through labour mobility*, Dr Manjula Luthria et. al, World Bank, 2006.

Seasonal immigration schemes raise complex practical, social, policy and economic issues, both for the host and the sending countries.

Horticulture sees several key principles supporting a potential pilot scheme:

- 1. A Pacific region seasonal labour program should incorporate the circularity of the Canadian and NZ schemes (i.e. return of ‘satisfied/satisfactory’ workers in subsequent years).**
- 2. Relevant Australian Award wages and condition (as a minimum) to apply, with Pacific workers entitled to the same rights and protections as their Australian-resident counterparts.**
- 3. Such a program should operate on a regional model, and ‘pair’ individual communities in Australia and the Pacific in ‘sister city’ style relationships, and link to wider community- and capacity-building, and development goals.**
- 4. Mutual-responsibility, mutual benefit and cost-sharing must underpin contributions by all participants, and partner governments.**
- 5. Establishment of effective stakeholder Steering Committees and other mechanisms, at both the national and regional level, to ensure financially-viable and equitable outcomes for all participants.**

1. A Pacific region seasonal labour program for Australia should incorporate the circularity of the Canadian/NZ schemes (i.e. return of ‘satisfied/satisfactory’ workers in subsequent years)
 - ❖ We envisage a program with a minimum stay for each worker of 3-4 months, and a maximum stay of 6 months, in any given year.
 - ❖ Workers to be employed within their region for the duration of their stay (as coordinated by the Regional Steering Committee/Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinator).
 - ❖ Workers will have some confidence of an assured income stream for at least part of each year.
 - ❖ This should encourage orderly return of workers to the sending country; and reduce or eliminate visa ‘overstays’.
 - ❖ This should also reduce negative social and familial impacts on the sending families/communities (and hopefully minimise community/family damage or detachment as seen in other longer-term ‘guest worker’ schemes).
 - ❖ Importantly for growers, it avoids several disadvantages of using large numbers of back-packers (working visa) to fill seasonal labour shortages
 - If workers are eligible to return, skills learned are not lost, but rather built upon;
 - This also saves constant retraining costs/time; and
 - Growers can have confidence that they will have sufficient labour to harvest a crop, thus encouraging investment.

- ❖ In order to determine if a worker can return the following season, they will be assessed on the following criteria: they are reliable, punctual, committed to the program, enthusiastic and most of all that they are efficient in terms of productivity.
2. Relevant Australian Award wages and conditions (as a minimum, the default Federal Horticulture Award 2000) will apply, with Pacific workers entitled to the same rights and protections as their Australian-resident counterparts.
- ❖ The concept is that that existing local workers (living in the region, or itinerant) would form the initial “core” of workers; normal year deficits would be met by another “core” of Pacific Island workers (to ensure consistency of work available over the longer-term); and that any remaining deficits (eg in bumper years) would be met via existing working visa (back-packer) channels.
 - ❖ While many growers currently offer higher than Award wages and conditions in order to attract labour in regions/times of acute shortage/competition, the Award will provide minimum protection for workers
 - Seasonal labour in horticulture is generally based on piece-rates; for example, the **minimum** wage for an average picker, working a 38 hour week under the national Award, is currently \$717.92. However, it is common for keen workers to make significantly more than this (eg \$1,500 – \$2,500 per week); and growers prefer productive workers, because fruit and vegetables must be picked for optimum quality and storage;
 - One key objective of the proposed program is to ensure substantial financial benefits for willing workers (and their families and communities).
 - ❖ This is a non-negotiable condition of employers’ engagement with the program.
 - ❖ Selection criteria for employers, developed by the National Pilot Steering Committee and implemented by the Regional Steering Committee/Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinator, will assist in identifying *bona fide* growers, and eliminate the potential for exploitation of workers. Such criteria might include:
 - Membership of the relevant peak industry/state grower body;
 - Eurogap/Globalgap accreditation (internationally-recognised standards covering good farm/food/HR etc. practice);
 - Written undertakings to adhere to the agreed minimum working standards (eg Award wages and conditions), code of conduct and expected HR management behaviours;
 - Demonstrated suitable arrangements for (acceptable back-packer style/caravan-park) accommodation and transport;
 - ‘Good standing’ within their local industry – recognised for meeting or exceeding all minimum Award wages and conditions, a good history with employment of seasonal workers, etc.;
 - Compliance with the Horticulture Code of Conduct;
 - Payment of an agreed up-front fee towards costs of administration of the program (including sourcing of labour, oversight of ‘pastoral care’) at the regional level.
 - ❖ Every effort will be made to optimise full-time work for workers for the duration of each visit (this may be within different sectors of horticultural industries in the region, as coordinated by the regional Steering Committee/Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinator; and Regional Committees/ Seasonal Labour Coordinators will need to

have in place contingency plans to cope with unexpected events, such as a natural disaster, to ensure that every worker can be placed for the full rotation).

- ❖ The program will require a regional grievance/dispute resolution processes, as well as a national 'ombudsman' function for appeals
 - Workers will either be found an alternate employer within the same region - in case of conflict or exploitation; or sent home - in the case of unacceptable/outrageous behaviours;
 - Immediate ban on any future involvement in any immigration/visa program if employer found to be knowingly non-compliant with the minimum requirements, or subject to a proven grievance/dispute allegation;
 - Workers and employers engaged in the program will be required to sign undertakings (to act 'in good faith') prior to acceptance into the program;
 - Workers should not be tied to an individual employer for the duration of their stay; there should be mechanisms under which a worker can seek to change employer or be transferred to a different workplace, particularly in the event of a dispute.

3. Such a program should operate on a regional model, and 'pair' individual communities in Australia and the Pacific in 'sister city' style relationships; with links to wider community- and capacity-building and development goals.

- ❖ We envisage that an individual island/village/community from the sending country will be permanently 'paired' with a regional Australian community where horticulture faces severe and ongoing seasonal labour shortages
 - We would envisage working closely with the sending governments, and our NZ colleagues, to ensure that the sending communities are 'quarantined' to either NZ or Australia, and that there is no overlap/duplication.
- ❖ The building of long-term linkages between the communities of the sending and host countries is one of the significant positive spin-offs we envisage in this proposed program.
- ❖ We anticipate ongoing cultural and social interactions (eg school, church, Rotary/Lions, Scouts, etc. exchanges).
- ❖ We would also expect, over time, that significant capacity-building for the sending community (eg economic, environmental, technology/skills transfer, and other developmental assistance) will follow naturally as a result of the close connection between the two communities.
- ❖ Engagement and commitment of the host community is a pre-requisite to participation in the program.
- ❖ Those regions where horticulture has a significant presence will also enable workers to move from crop to crop over their stay, without having to move regions, thus building ease and long-term relationships with the host community, and guarantee substantial financial benefits to the worker.
- ❖ Many Australian horticultural regions already have significant Pacific communities as part of their make-up
 - This will facilitate the employment of liaison officers from the relevant sending culture, and the building of stronger links.

- ❖ Cultural/social issues will be restricted, in each region, to each particular sending community, rather than mixed (with added pressure on local services).
- ❖ Service provision within the region (eg English language classes; Recognition of Current Competencies at Certificate Levels 1-3; social/church activities for workers and their community) will be easier for the host community to target and offer.
- ❖ Original participants may, over time (if the program is continued beyond the pilot), become mentors for younger workers.

4. Mutual-responsibility, mutual benefit and cost-sharing must underpin contributions by all participants, and partner governments.

- ❖ The sending community and country will need to undertake (with assistance and support from the host community/country) preparation for all for all intending workers; this could include:
 - Recruitment, selection and screening;
 - Any up-front costs to workers (eg travel to selection interviews);
 - Pre-departure orientation/training (on Australian climatic conditions, distances to town/transport, banking/remittance return, food and accommodation, required clothing, Australian working conditions, health/medical insurance, etc);
 - Briefings on social issues and behaviour (including alcohol/drugs, sexual risks, gambling);
 - Health, character or other checks may be required as part of the application process.
- ❖ Growers/employers and workers will each need to bear some of the costs (such as airfares/transfers/training for workers); employers will also be responsible for induction and OH&S training, pre-departure and on-farm
 - As many larger growers will be looking for significant numbers of workers over a given season (eg 50 -100), it is difficult to see how the full cost of airfares, etc. for this number of workers can be borne by the growers up-front;
 - Many growers have recently had two or more poor/disastrous seasons - due to combinations of drought, frost and hail, for example - and their cash reserves, prior to harvest, will be low. For example, for an employer seeking 50 workers, this could translate to a liability of \$100,000 up-front;
 - We propose that the Australian Government (or, possibly, the World Bank) pay the up-front costs as a 'loan' to both workers and employers (perhaps as part of the Pacific development/aid program); reimbursed by both employers and workers in an agreed manner over the course of each placement;
 - The workers' share may be recouped, in an agreed schedule, through the wage arrangements;
 - Growers are not paid for their produce in any consistent manner, and the issue of timing of employers' re-payment will need to be agreed by industry and the Australian Government. In the longer-term, should the program be continued, this may possibly be done through the taxation system (on a pro-rata basis per hour worked for each employer on each rotation).
- ❖ Maximum reasonable rates should be set (based on the Award, and to be agreed by the National Steering Committee) for accommodation/food/transport, provided by the employer for their workers

- Re-payment may be deducted from workers' wages according to agreed principles.
- ❖ However, it is critical that all participants, particularly workers, are clear about all financial arrangements – gross and net (including all deductions for taxation & superannuation, living expenses, etc); minimum/potential 'take-home' pay; any payments for food/accommodation, etc.).
- ❖ Partner governments will need to make decisions on the handling of workers' remittances, and what portion of the earned wages may/will be sent back to their families; superannuation and taxation arrangements, etc.
- ❖ The sending government will have a critical role in terms of targeting, recruitment and selection of workers, provision of pre-departure orientation, consular officials designated as national liaison officers, assistance with return of remittances/banking transactions, etc.
- ❖ Sending governments can also assist in identifying capacity-building or developmental activities which could be enhanced as a flow-on from the program.
- ❖ HAC recommends that the partner governments come to mutually-agreed arrangements in regard to critical issues such as taxation and health insurance.
- ❖ The National Steering Committee, and the Regional Steering Committee and host communities, will need to put in place contingency plans (eg in the event of a natural disaster striking a given region) to ensure that workers can undertake their full stay (and ensure substantial financial returns for workers).
- ❖ The program should be linked to Australia's foreign aid program to maximise potential for technology/skills transfer.
- ❖ The partner governments should aim for regulatory simplicity and efficiency; eg the current inconsistencies in Australian Taxation rates between Australian (13%) and foreign (29%) workers must be resolved, and HAC recommends that seasonal visa holders be eligible for Medicare.

5. Effective stakeholder Steering Committees and other mechanisms, at both the national and regional level, to ensure financially-viable and equitable outcomes for all participants.

- ❖ HAC envisages the establishment of a National Pilot Steering Committee
 - Involving representation from HAC, industry, unions, representatives from the Partner Government(s)' consulates/liaison officers and Australian-based representative of the sending communities, Local Government Association, churches and other social support networks, relevant Federal Government Departments (eg DEEW&T, DI&C, DFAT, DAFF), etc. to:
 - develop agreed guidelines for the pilots (develop selection criteria for prospective employers and employees, establish appropriate accommodation standards, etc.);
 - agree the pilot regions;
 - establish cost-sharing and mutual-obligation parameters of the participants/stakeholders;
 - liaise with relevant Federal Government Departments and/or Partner Government representatives on issues such as insurance arrangements for the seasonal workers, taxation arrangements, transfer of worker

- remittances, enforcement activities, dispute/grievance resolution mechanisms, etc.; and
 - o monitor and evaluate the program.
- ❖ This structure would be mirrored at the level of each agreed pilot community by a Regional Steering Committee. This Committee will be based, wherever possible, on existing (augmented as necessary - eg bi-lingual liaison officers, representatives from local Council) regional horticulture reference groups. The role of each Regional Steering Committee - in liaison with the Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinator and Horticultural Coordinators - would be to:
 - Coordinate host community support for, and engagement, in the pilot;
 - Recruit, screen and select *bona fide* employers to take part in the pilot against the nationally-agreed selection criteria;
 - Ensure suitable accommodation and transport facilities (which meet agreed minimum standards) are available for workers (either on-farm, or within the local community);
 - Ensure appropriate 'pastoral care'/support mechanisms are in place for workers; eg
 - o appoint Cultural Liaison Officer, and encourage engagement from other representatives from the sending community to offer advice and support
 - o encourage union involvement at the local level;
 - o establish grievance/dispute resolution processes
 - o arrange for English language classes to be available, as required
 - o encourage and facilitate social/religious/cultural activities and exchanges between sending and host communities, etc);
 - Liaise with local RTOs - and assist with the RCC/RPL process (for horticultural skills) for workers on an ongoing basis as required; as well as arranging training in valuable adjunct skills for the workers/sending communities (such as basic building and mechanical skills);
 - Monitor implementation issues at the local/regional level, and provide feedback to the National Steering Committee and the National Program Manager;
 - Provide all necessary data and other assistance towards evaluation of the pilot program.

Management of a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture

The most critical issue, arising from the NZ experience, is clearly the need address 'pastoral care' and social support for workers - most especially in the first rotation.

The overwhelming response from NZ growers, regional and national coordinators, workers (and the independent evaluation conducted by Nic Maclellan of Swinburne) is that this issue is a 'make or break' one for the NZ program.

When pastoral care issues are addressed adequately (by the grower, the contracting/coordinating organisation, the cultural liaison officer), the NZ program is working well. Problems and concerns have arisen when this type of care has not been present, or has not sufficiently been addressed by growers.

In order to ensure that any Australian pilot is successful, HAC proposes the following key infrastructure:

- 1. Government fund (for the duration of the pilot), and HAC employ:**
 - A National Program Manager, and
 - One FTE Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinator per 30-40 growers for each Region included in the Pilot.

 - 2. HAC take responsibility for coordinating recruitment (sourcing and selection) and pastoral care arrangements through the employment of a network of Horticulture Coordinators.**
- 1. a) The role of the National Program Manager is to:**
 - take responsibility for the efficient and cost-effective running of the Pilot Program;
 - coordinate with the Horticulture Coordinators;
 - undertake the recruitment/training/oversight of the Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinators, and the ongoing sharing of information/ideas, and RSLC's professional development;
 - implement the national monitoring and evaluation of the Pilot.

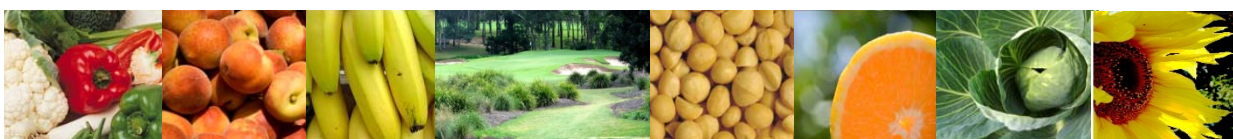
 - b) The role of the Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinators is to oversight the pastoral care of workers, and their smooth incorporation into regional communities and the Australian workplace and:**
 - assist the Regional Steering Committee/Seasonal Labour Coordinators in evaluating prospective employers against the nationally-agreed selection criteria (eg inspect and evaluate proposed accommodation and transport arrangements against minimum criteria);

- in consultation with Horticulture Coordinators, match workers with employers/regional communities;
- ensure that workers are greeted on their arrival in Australia and escorted to their host Region and employer;
- facilitate/manage (in collaboration with Horticulture Coordinators, Regional industry bodies and growers involved in the program) the induction of workers - pre-departure, and on arrival in their host Region;
- undertake regular farm visits to ensure employers and workers are adhering to their contractual obligations and agreed codes of conduct;
- assist the Regional Steering Committee to ensure that work placements for each worker optimise their earning capacity, and meet minimum stay requirements (eg 3 months), within their Regional community if possible;
- ensure completing workers are escorted to international departure point on conclusion of their rotation.

2. In order to oversight the sourcing, placement and care of workers, HAC will employ (in the longer-term, on a cost-recovery basis from industry) a network of Horticulture Coordinators, who will act as 'honest brokers' between the sending and host communities:

- act as a conduit for sourced labour (in liaison with sending country governments);
 - facilitate recruitment of workers;
 - undertake selection of workers, and facilitate their screening;
 - in consultation with Regional Steering Committee/Seasonal Labour Coordinators, arrange placement of workers from sending communities in host communities, and specifically, placement of individual workers with host employers;
- assist in improving essential sending country infrastructure and systems (eg databases, health screening);
- in consultation with sending communities and Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinators, facilitate orientation and pre-departure induction of workers; eg development of targeted, sending country- and industry/region-specific, orientation and induction materials, on issues such as:
 - OH&S
 - cultural expectations
 - climatic conditions in host community
 - operation of 'standard' Western household appliances
 - standards of behaviour
 - appropriate clothing
 - social norms, etc.
- facilitate the orientation/induction of employers into their pastoral care responsibilities; eg 'nipping emerging issues in the bud' and orienting workers to issues around
 - OH&S
 - cultural expectations
 - operation of 'standard' Western household appliances
 - standards of behaviour
 - appropriate clothing

- social norms, etc.;
- manage (in collaboration with Regional industry bodies and growers involved in the program) the induction of workers on arrival in their host Region
 - induction to the region
 - induction to the industry
 - induction to the growers' individual enterprise;
- streamlining of many administrative tasks ('the paperwork') for employers; eg checklists of essential arrangements to make with, or on behalf of, workers; including:
 - development of template materials for approved growers and workers; eg
 - codes of conduct
 - employment contracts;
 - relevant State/Federal wages and conditions materials
 - insurance requirements
 - simple materials outlining and explaining to workers gross weekly wages minus deductions (i.e. how to read their payslip);
 - opening bank accounts for each worker
 - independent testing of drivers' licences
 - useful material and guidelines for workers' noticeboards (in accommodation/common-rooms) – eg 'house rules'
 - phonecards for workers
 - applications for worker Tax File Numbers
 - arrangements with local Opportunity Shops for workers to acquire appropriate attire for climatic conditions in Region; etc.;
- ensuring pastoral care/social support is maintained at the appropriate level including:
 - liaison with Regional Seasonal Labour Coordinators
 - liaison with Cultural Liaison Officers in their Region
 - liaison with local church, sporting, social and cultural organisations to ensure acceptance by workers into host community;
- negotiating with banking organisations for reasonable rates for workers' remittances home;
- liaison with, and support for, sending communities/governments regarding 'value-add' activities and services eg
 - additional skills training for workers while in their host communities (eg skills to add the new roof to the school, build a new room for the church, fix the old/install a new pump for the village well)
 - additional training on return to the sending community (eg 'Starting or developing your own small business')
 - facilitating sending and host country exchanges (eg church, school, sporting, service organisations);
- undertake exit interviews for workers before they return home.



Potential Regions for a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for Horticulture

The following regions (in no particular order) **have been identified based on their ability to almost immediately meet the criteria as described in the previous section.** Should the Pilot proceed, each region will be asked to provide a detailed formal application to be considered for the Pilot, and the full proposal will be assessed against the agreed criteria. **This listing of proposed regions is by no means complete** – many other regions have indicated strong interest in taking part in a trial, but require a little more time to ensure they can demonstrably meet all the criteria.

South Australia: *Virginia/Adelaide Plains*

Grow SA proposes a pilot within the horticulture industry on the Adelaide Plains. The Adelaide Plains community is a “*multicultural community of proud Australians*” with a vast ethnic background representing Italian, Greek, Turkish, Vietnamese and Cambodian roots. The community is supportive of cultural and religious differences with strong Catholic and Buddhist ties.

Current estimates show a labour shortage in the Adelaide Plains region that can be quantified as follows:-

- Overall regional labour shortage of 300 – 400 full time employees in fields such as Farmhands, Hand Packers, Greenhouse hands, Packing shed labourers and machinery operators. (These occupations are identified as “priority occupations” or occupations assessed as being in demand and occupations for which employers have experienced recruitment difficulty. Source *DEEWR Skills in Demand research and regional employer survey and Productivity Places Program 1st April 2008*).
- Seasonal labour shortage (in excess of the above) which totals over 150 seasonal positions in grading and packing along with picking and pruning operations.

Grow SA proposes a pilot program involving 25 to 50 people in a revolving 3 month program, managed by Grow SA on behalf of the industry:

- Involving two employers in the Greenhouse and the Potato Packing sectors
- Two groups of workers for 3 month employment periods rotating (with sufficient time between to allow induction and handover).
- Community support structures managed by a Regional Steering Committee to include:-
 - Cultural and Religious support
 - Community accommodation infrastructure
 - Community access programs.

Region	Crops grown	Time of requirement for labour	Number of Workers required - Pilot	Number of Workers required - Long-term	Managing organisation within region
Virginia/Adelaide Plains	Greenhouse (picking/pruning) Potatoes (grading/packing)	All year Autumn-winter	25-50	150	Grow SA
SA	Harvest/ packing	All year	n/a	5,000	Grow SA

The Pilot program will require employer support and commitment to:-

- Payment of award base wage (minimum)
- Accepted Australian working conditions
- Adequate OH&S Systems
- Subsidised air fares and community accommodation
- Induction, OH&S and Quality Assurance training on arrival
- Fund additional training to:-
 - o Initial employment term – Cert II in Production Horticulture (or equivalent)
 - o Subsequent employment term – Cert III in Production Horticulture (or equivalent)
 - o Culminating at Cert IV or Diploma Level as applicable.

Grow SA will undertake to manage the regional pilot program on behalf of industry and assist with the establishment and management of:-

- The Regional Steering Committee
- Community accommodation centre
- Training and workplace development programs
- Logistical management and group handovers
- Community and industry assimilation

On successful implementation of the Pilot, Grow SA would envisage expansion of the program into other areas of Horticulture in South Australia where there are shortfalls of seasonal requirements for pickers and packers of up to 5,000 positions.

NT: Darwin/Katherine/Kununurra

The Northern Territory Horticultural Industry Association proposes that a pilot program be undertaken in Top End Rural (outer Darwin) and Katherine.

Darwin is within close proximity to Asian countries and accordingly the region is diverse in multiculturalism with a cosmopolitan community of approximately 68 different languages in a population of under 100,000 people.

The Northern Territory has a highly transient population with a turnover of approximately 50% of the population in a ten year period. This transient cycle fosters a society that is extremely tolerant and accommodating to out of area visitors.

The Northern Territory Mango Industry is currently the biggest horticultural industry in the Northern Territory, subsequently having the largest labour requirement. The industry has the potential to employ up to 2000 seasonal workers in annual peak harvest however labour requirements vary from season to season. Seasonal labour requirements are influenced by many factors that are beyond reasonable control.

Peak harvest generally begins in late-September in Darwin and mid-October in Katherine and Kununurra. Traditionally, peak harvest and intense labour requirements concluded by the end of November however labour requirements for harvest and post-harvest activities are extending to mid January due to varietal developments, the establishment of processing and treatment facilities and integrated supply arrangements.

The mango industry experiences extreme shortages particularly in high production seasons. The Northern Territories small population and remoteness means it is heavily reliant on outside workers, particularly overseas visitors.

The Asian Vegetable, Cucurbit (melons) and Banana industries also experience ongoing labour shortages, however shortages in this sector are not restricted to a small harvest window. Labour requirements in these commodities are annual and ongoing and extreme shortages occur in October and November as they compete with the mango industry for available labour. Table Grape growers (in Alice Springs and Ti Tree) experience labour shortages and require up to 400 workers in annual harvest from November to January. The grape industry also experiences shortages in pruning and training season in May and June. While some commodities are able to retain harvest workers to prune immediately following harvest, this is not the case with table grapes.

Proposal for trials in NT – Mango harvest & pruning

Region	Crops grown	Time of requirement for labour	Number of Workers required - Pilot	Number of Workers required - Long-term	Managing organisation within region
Darwin/ Kununurra	Mangoes	Sept-Jan	120	1,000+	NT Horticulture Association & NT Mango Industry Association
Katherine	Mangoes	Oct-Jan	120	(see above)	As above

The Northern Territory mango industry is well positioned to participate in a pilot program that will provide seasonal employment opportunities for Pacific Islanders and assist the industry address critical labour shortages in peak harvest periods.

While other commodities in the Northern Territory experience sporadic labour shortages, the mango industry as the most mature horticulture industry has worked collaboratively with a number of key stakeholders since 2002 to address shortages including:

- The Department of Employment and Work Relations
- The Department of Immigration and Multicultural affairs
- NT Government business and skilled migration
- The National Harvest labour information Service
- Local and national employment agencies
- Backpacker agencies
- NT Tourism Commission

It is proposed that the mango industry will be the primary participants in initial trials and other commodities will be encompassed as the program develops.

The industry is well positioned to meet the criteria, as proposed by HAC, to establish a trial pilot program as follows:

- The industry has developed and successfully implemented a crop forecasting program that will allow reasonably accurate harvest commencement and conclusion dates across the Top End , Katherine and Kununurra
- The industry has developed and utilizes a formula for accurately estimating the number of pickers and packers that will be required in each location
- There are a number of select farms that have appropriate accommodation and infrastructure support
- There are a number of select growers whom have the appropriate psychology to manage a potentially community sensitive program
- Farms are located in remote areas , thus well positioned to manage any potential absconding issues should they arise
- There are a number of select farms that have an understanding of the sophisticated nature of such a program in terms of: health and immunization issues; language issues; occupational health and safety issues; Australian workplace relations expectations etc .
- The industry has strong and demonstrated occupational health and safety standards and risk assessment processes : the industry won the NT Work Safe Innovative Safety Strategies Award in 2006
- Industry representatives have strong engagement and a sound working relationship with critical and interested stakeholders such as Business and Skilled Migration Division of the Northern Territory Government, whom would play an integral role in a steering group.
- Support from relevant councils and local government
- Capital and human resource commitment from the industry to support a pilot program

Pilot Program

The industry employs approximate 1500 workers in peak harvest and it is envisioned that a pilot program will initially host approximately 120 workers in the Top End and similar numbers in Katherine.

The pilot will work 'select farms' in the Top End and Katherine whom will be formally selected by their demonstrated commitment and capacity to meet a set of criteria. Initial consultation (in such a short time frame) suggests that there will be approximately three participating farms in each region. Employment will be in September, October and November and duties will be predominately harvest and post harvest work including pruning. Workers will be provided with on farm accommodation.

Organisational capacity

The program will be managed by the Northern Territory Horticultural Association as the peak representative body and funded by the Northern Territory Mango Industry Association.

A regional committee will be established and will comprise:

- Industry leaders
- Grower participants
- NT Department of Business and Skilled Migration Director - Mary Cunningham
- Dept Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Outreach Officer - Pat Illige
- Charles Darwin University

The role of the committee will be to:

- Contributes to development of selection criteria and code of conduct for participating farms 'select growers'.
- Undertakes recruitment of 'select growers' in accordance with selection criteria
- Undertakes on farm assessment / audit of infrastructure and OHS risk management
- Works with reciprocating country to establish mobilisation protocols
- Monitors mobilisation protocols (health checks , immunisations, visa applications travel arrangements etc)
- Monitors participating farms during employment period
- Undertakes evaluation process and reports to national committee
- Negotiates and liaises with reciprocating regional committee
- Enters into contracts with regional and national committees
- Manages disputes during employment period
- Provide information support for workers.

Background Information

The Northern Territory Mango Industry Association is the regional representative body for the mango industry in the Northern Territory. It has close relations with the Australian Mango Industry association and is an affiliate of the Northern Territory Horticultural Association (NTHA) .

The mango industry, as the largest horticultural industry in the Northern Territory has been proactive in addressing labour shortages since it experienced a crisis labour shortage in 2002 and has comprehensive statistical data on labour requirements and worker demographics. The industry is currently collating similar data on other crops grown in the NT such as melons, citrus and vegetables however this data will not be available until August 2008.

Labour statistics

A study commissioned by the Northern Territory Minister for Primary Industries in 2004 and released by Department of Business Industry and Resource Development states "Labour shortages

are potentially an issue that could limit further growth of the industry. Projections by DBIRD estimate economic losses (including direct and indirect benefits) due to lack of labour, ranging from \$5.8 million to \$26.1 million depending on seasonal conditions.” *Source: A Socio Economic Perspective- Karen White, Horticulture Division DBIRD.*

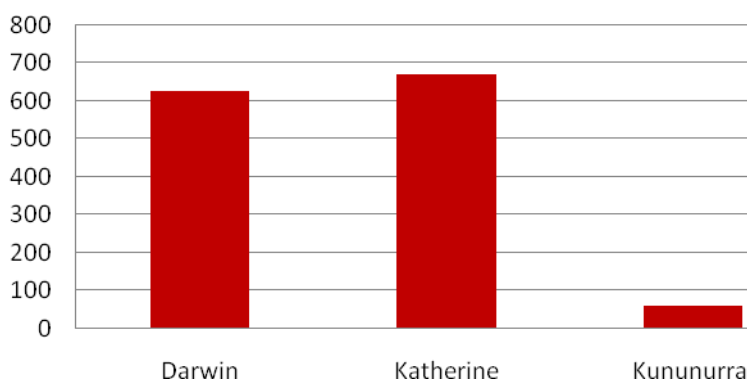
A survey on seasonal harvest labour conducted in 2007 captured:

- 19 commercial farms in Darwin
- 8 commercial farms in Katherine
- 1 commercial farm in Kununurra

The survey report captures 1355 seasonal employees in the 2007 mango harvest in Darwin, Katherine and Kununurra. It is estimated that this is 80% of the total labour force in the 2007 mango harvest.

- 670 workers in Katherine
- 625 workers in Darwin
- 60 workers in Kununurra

Number of workers in 2007

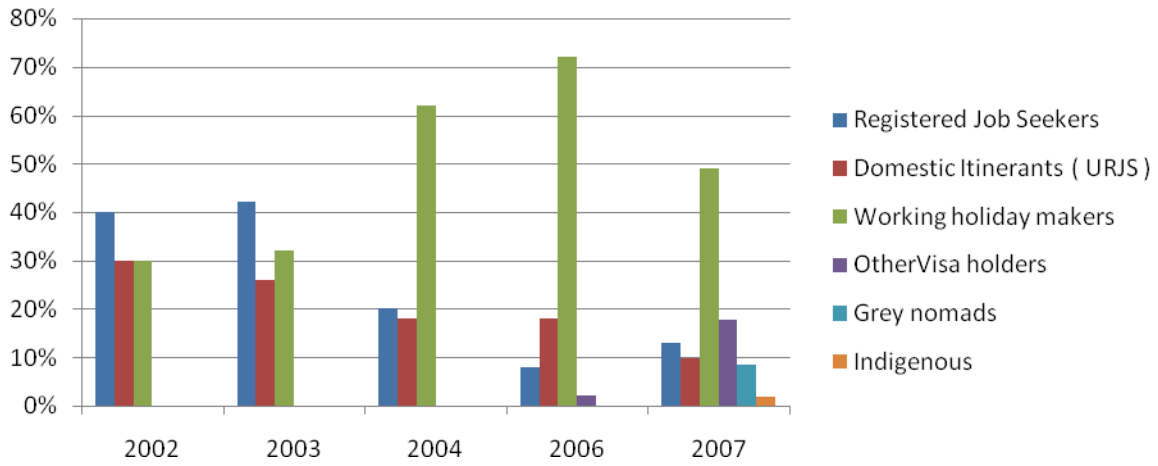


The Northern Territory is highly reliant on out of area workers with 67% of its seasonal workforce being non-residents on visas. The availability of workers is volatile and subject to many external influences.

Working holiday makers, while well intended, often suffer from climatic intolerance and are unable to work for an entire season. The average period a worker stayed in harvest employment in 2006 was 2.36 weeks in Darwin and 2.06 weeks in Katherine. This high turnover of staff is difficult for farms to manage in terms of ongoing recruitment and retraining in peak harvest.

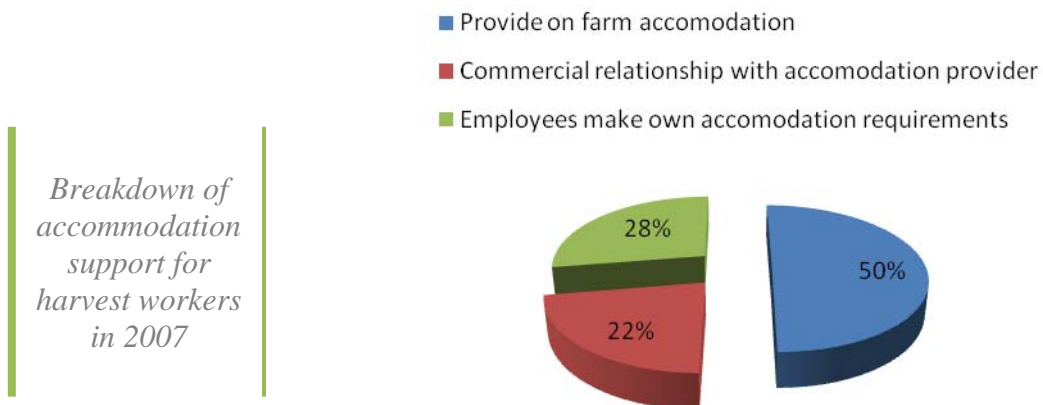
The 2006 labour report highlights *“Climatic intolerance remains the biggest contributor to low levels of staff retention in the mango industry and is relative to the large percentage of out of area workers. Climatic intolerance worsens as workers move South to Katherine and South West to Kununurra and the heat intensifies. If the industry is to be globally competitive it must secure an efficient workforce that can adjust to, or be accustomed to the harsh Northern Territory climate.”*

Historical Workforce Statistics

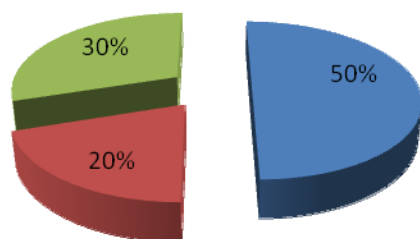


Infrastructure

To address labour shortages there are an increasing number of farms that are meeting the infrastructure requirements of a mobile workforce by providing on-farm accommodation and assisting with travel.



- Farms that assist with initial travel out to farm
- Farms that assist with daily commuting
- Farms where employees make own travel arrangements



Breakdown of travel support for harvest workers in 2007

Support for Proposed Guidelines for a Pacific Island Seasonal Labour Pilot for NT Horticulture Industry

The NT supports a national pilot program to be undertaken on a trial basis in key horticultural regions that experience labour shortages.

We support a proposed three year program with ongoing monitoring during the employment period and interim evaluation following each annual employment period and a full evaluation of the program at the end of the third year.

The NT submits that a 'one size fits all regions' may not apply and that variations in regional trials is a healthy way of assessing the pros and cons of varying models.

We support the circularity concept as a guiding principal and concur with HAC that a three year trial period will allow for a return visit by workers in each regional intake and the effectiveness of the program can be evaluated and improved with each annual intake.

Queensland: Southern Queensland Region (Lockyer/Fassifern, Granite Belt, Eastern Darling Downs)

Horticulture is the most labour intensive of all agricultural industries and is a major source of employment in many regional and rural communities throughout Queensland and Australia. Labour is the most critical factor in ensuring the smooth running of field preparation, planting, maintenance, harvesting and packing activities. Despite advances in technology, the horticulture will remain heavily reliant on manual workers.

Queensland's fruit and vegetable industry employs around 25,000 full time and part time people. In addition the industry employs a large number of casual and seasonal workers throughout the year. Despite accessing labour from a variety of sources, labour availability and skill shortages remain prominent in the Queensland horticulture industry and continue to constrain growers.

The future viability of the industry is heavily reliant on securing and retaining sufficient workers. To do this, the industry must effectively and efficiently manage and develop solutions to ongoing and emerging workforce issues and challenges. Growcom supports the implementation of a trial of a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme, similar to the current trial under way in New Zealand, as part of a mix of solutions to help address the country's shortage of horticultural workers.

This proposal outlines how a pilot could work in the Queensland horticulture industry.

Recent labour survey in Queensland horticulture industry

Growcom recently undertook a survey to further demonstrate labour shortages in the Queensland horticulture industry. More than 95% of respondents had been impacted upon by labour shortages during the past five years, and 83% had experienced losses or delays as result. To date, only one grower has indicated that their business has not been impacted upon by labour shortages.

Common themes arising from the survey were:

- Labour shortages are getting worse each year;
- It is difficult to get workers with an understanding of horticulture;

- High staff turnovers are a major issue;
- It is hard to find long term reliable workers;
- The number of local people available to work in the industry continues to decrease;
- Losses have occurred because people do their own thing and ignore instructions;
- Working extra hours to make up for lack of human resources;
- Some activities, such as pruning, are not being done properly, reducing production and quality.

We asked respondents what strategies they had used to help resolve their labour issues. More than 75% of respondents had paid above minimum wage, used labour hire companies, sought new sources of labour (such as backpackers) and provided flexible work arrangements. About 56% had used the Harvest trail service, about 52% had provided transport to and from their farm, and about 40% had offered accommodation options on farm.

Nearly 90% believed their business would benefit from a scheme to allow seasonal workers from overseas to travel to Australia to work in the horticulture industry.

Why Growcom supports a seasonal labour scheme pilot in Queensland

Over many years, Growcom has been consistently told by growers that the horticulture industry is facing labour shortages and that these labour shortages are getting worse every year. We have been told that if something is not done about this, fruit and vegetables will rot in the field and many growers will be ruined.

The majority of growers currently rely on backpackers to fulfil their harvest labour requirements. Although some growers find this workforce sufficient, we constantly hear that backpackers are not reliable, only stay for short periods, often leave without warning, and that they are not concerned with the critical aspects of their labour responsibilities such as quality control and technical accuracy. Despite these common criticisms, growers tell us they have no option but to use backpackers.

However, what growers really need is reliable and consistent labour during their harvest periods.

In response to these demands, and direction from our Board, Growcom has for the past few years lobbied for a scheme to allow workers from the Pacific Islands to come to Australia to work in the horticulture industry. This position was based on the assumption that this sort of scheme would provide direct benefits for growers in the form of reliable and consistent labour, while providing economic development benefits for Pacific Island economies.

Growcom strongly supports the trial of a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme in the Queensland horticulture industry. Queensland produces around a third of the nation's horticulture products and has a diverse array of occupations and production methods across a variety of commodities, regions and climates. The state's horticulture industry has a large demand for seasonal labour, with a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme strongly supported by producers all over the state, who together have demand for labour 12 months of the year.

Characteristics of Southern Queensland horticulture industry

For the purposes of this proposal, Southern Queensland is defined as the area incorporating the horticulture regions of the Lockyer / Fassifern, Eastern Darling Downs and Granite Belt. This region

produces more than \$350 million per annum at farm gate with the primary crops including lettuce, carrots, broccoli, beans, onions, apples, capsicums, tomatoes and stonefruit. The area is number one in Queensland in terms of value of vegetables produced.

There are around 850 producers in this region, with approximately 20,000 hectares under fruit and vegetable production. These producers employ more than 3,000 permanent and part time people, and have a substantial demand for casual and seasonal labour at peak periods throughout the year. This area is experiencing both labour and skill shortages. The unemployment rates in this area generally remain lower than the national average according to the 2006 Census (for example 5.2% in Australia, compared with 4.3% in Gatton and 3.6% in Applethorpe). Insufficient professional harvest workers remain in the area, resulting in a large reliance on backpackers who regularly turnover. Skilled or harder working labour continues to be lost to other industries, such as mining.

Demand for seasonal labour in the Southern Queensland horticulture region

It is difficult to estimate the demand for seasonal workers in the region, as these statistics are not collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. However, some of the dependent variables at the enterprise level include:

- The number, skill and maintenance of permanent workers (additional seasonal workers may be employed to fill gaps in permanent workforce);
- Level of mechanisation;
- What commodities are actually produced and how weather, planting and other factors have affected cropping;
- Timing of crop and whether or not it coincides with availability of labour e.g. university holidays;
- Turn-over of seasonal staff which is affected by source/s of labour (e.g. backpackers primarily motivated by travel not work), training and supervision, added difficulties such as WHS hazards;
- Size of enterprise and any value adding.

The ratio of permanent to seasonal staff is heavily dependent on the commodity and the size of enterprise with growers in small businesses reporting that they double their staff in peak season (for example, from four to eight staff), to larger enterprises where up to five times as many seasonal staff are employed at in one time in the peak season as permanent staff (for example, from 20 to 120 staff).

Considering there are around 3,000 permanent workers in the Southern Queensland region, Growcom estimates the demand for seasonal labour will be in the vicinity of 6,000 to 15,000 workers. On average, growers seem to report a labour shortage of around a third of their required workers, therefore it is estimated that the labour shortage in this region is between 2,000 to 5,000 workers during peak periods.

Background to the Southern Queensland pilot proposal

Growcom believes it is important to focus on a specific region for a pilot in Queensland to encapsulate how a seasonal labour scheme in Australia could be permanently implemented. We envisage that once a successful pilot is completed, a seasonal labour scheme would be implemented in other horticulture regions throughout Queensland and Australia.

This proposal has been developed looking at a time period of December 2008 till about March / May 2009. For the purposes of a pilot, we have made a concerted effort to involve on a small number of large growers who are able to manage a trial between them. This approach was undertaken to allow a pilot to be trialled, while limiting the number of stakeholders involved and therefore allowing for alternative strategies to be incorporated and tested.

We have approached growers who have an understanding that they will be responsible for:

- Australian award wages and conditions to apply as a minimum;
- Consideration of pastoral care factors (such as provision of community information about church services, medical facilities and recreational opportunities);
- Demonstrated suitable arrangements for accommodation and transport;
- Upfront costs including airfares, transfers, training (with perhaps half these costs able to be reimbursed through cost sharing); and
- On-farm induction and WH&S costs.

Pilot proposal for a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme in Southern Queensland

Growcom has been working with growers in Southern Queensland to put forward a pilot proposal for a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme. This proposal has been developed looking at the time period from December 2008 for a period of 4 to 6 months. This time period corresponds with labour demand in this area.

Unless the shortfall in seasonal workers is addressed, the local industry will not realise its full potential, production will plateau and export opportunities will remain unrealised. Investment will not reach its full potential. Allowing Pacific Islanders to work in the horticulture industry will also reduce the heavy reliance on backpackers.

We propose that 100 Pacific Islanders be allocated to Southern Queensland to participate in a trial of a seasonal labour scheme within the Queensland horticulture industry. Our proposal involves 50 workers allocated to the Lockyer Valley with one employer, and the other 50 workers allocated to three growers in the region around Stanthorpe / Applethorpe. This approach has been incorporated to allow for sufficient involvement, as well as trial and error of strategies.

During a pilot, Growcom would undertake a leadership and management support role on behalf of the Queensland horticulture industry to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. This will include a supportive role for growers and regional steering committee.

Preliminary investigations on a regional steering committee would include the following representatives:

- Owners/Managers or HR Managers from businesses involved in the trial;
- Growcom;
- Local grower association;
- Industry Outpost Officer from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship placed within Growcom;
- Area Consultative Committee;
- Regional council;
- Support agencies including cultural, religious and social.

Local hostels have demonstrated their interest in providing accommodation for the Pacific Islanders in these regions, with transport facilities offered to and from farms. The type of facilities offered by the local hostel includes:

- Accommodation in small dorm style rooms (2-6 beds). Bedding is also supplied (Linen laundered by the hostel and rooms cleaned daily);
- Washing Machines;
- A large dining room;
- Full kitchen facilities plus BBQ outdoors;
- TV rooms;
- Transport to and from work;
- Shuttle bus to town to do shopping;
- Large area for playing sports such as football and cricket and bonfires (when allowed).

There are also social and community activities that can be undertaken in the region. This can be moulded depending on where the Pacific Islanders originate, and the types of activities they will be seeking. There are sporting clubs; churches and religious facilities; cultural exchange opportunities; community events; local charities and performances.

Constraints to putting forward a pilot proposal

Growcom would like to make it clear that it is very difficult for growers to say whether they would like to be involved in a pilot of a Pacific Island seasonal labour scheme. The main reasons include:

- There has been no announcement from Government on how the scheme would actually work and be implemented;
- There is no real indication of what the upfront costs would entail;
- What the health care arrangements would be;
- Uncertainty around what time of year the pilot would begin (different commodities require a seasonal workforce at different times of the year);
- Political and media attention.

Growcom is willing to work (through HAC) with the Federal Government and growers once an announcement has been made on how a seasonal labour scheme could work. Once more details are known, it will be a lot easier to develop a more detailed and substantive pilot in Queensland. We anticipate that, when the specific details of a pilot scheme have been finalised, there will be a number of growers who wish to participate.

Region	Crops grown	Time of requirement for labour	Number of Workers required - Pilot	Number of Workers required - Long-term	Managing organisation within region

Southern Queensland Region	Lettuce, carrots, broccoli, beans, onions, apples, capsicums, tomatoes and stonefruit	Dec-March/May	100	2,000 - 5,000	Growcom
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Victoria: Goulburn Valley/Cobram, Swan Hill/Robinvale

There are sufficient growers in each area who could meet the criteria; and also provide appropriate accommodation and facilities.

Region	Crops grown	Time of requirement for labour	Number of Workers required - Pilot	Number of Workers required - Long-term	Managing organisation within region
Goulburn Valley	Fresh tomato harvesting (pack-house); Stone Fruit/pome fruit (harvesting); Pruners for stone- & pome fruit	Jan- April Nov-May June-Aug	400	2,200-3,300 1,000+	Fruit Growers Victoria
Swan Hill/Robinvale	Stone Fruit; Tablegrapes	Sept-Feb Mar-May	100-200	400-500	Swan Hill City Council Agriculture Committee

NSW: Tumut/Batlow, Orange, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, Far North Coast

Region	Crops grown	Time of requirement for labour	Action required	Number of Workers required - Pilot	Number of Workers required - Long-term	Managing organisation within region
Cowra/Young/ Orange/ Forbes/ Bathurst	Apple Cherry Berry Wine Grapes Stonefruit	Feb- April Nov-Jan Nov-Mar Feb- Aug Dec-April	Thinning, picking Picking Picking/Pruning Picking	400	4000	Cabonne/ Orange Council Orchardist Taskforce (consisting of growers, local government council reps, and religious leaders, etc.).
MIA (Griffith, Leeton, Narrandra)	Apricot Citrus Grape Stonefruit/V egetables	Nov-Dec Jan- Dec Feb-March Feb-April	Picking Picking Picking	500	5000	Some growers within the region have expressed interest in being on a management committee.
Tumut/ Batlow	Apples Stone fruit	Feb-May Oct-March	Picking, thinning Picking	250	2500	Locals have expressed interest in being on a steering committee and will liaise with local government.
Far North Coast	Avocado Blueberries Coffee Custard Apples Lychees/ Macadamia Summerfruit	June-July Dec-Jan Nov-Dec July-Sep Feb-March May-July Oct-Nov	Picking Picking Picking Picking Picking Picking	200	2000	