

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP)

Overview

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) allows employers to hire temporary foreign workers when Canadian citizens or permanent residents are not available.

Why was it started?

The Canadian government established SAWP to facilitate seasonal agricultural migration between Jamaica and Canada. It later expanded the program to Mexico and other Caribbean countries. It was the first temporary work program established in Canada.

How does it work?

This program is part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and requires a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) in the initial application. Employers can hire temporary foreign workers from the list of participating countries for a maximum period of 8 months between January 1 and December 15, provided they are able to offer at least 240 hours of work within a period of 6 weeks or less. Production must be in specific commodity sectors, and the activity must be on a farm or otherwise related to primary agriculture. Workers must be at least 18, a citizen of one of the participating countries, have experience in farming, and be able to satisfy Canadian immigration laws and the laws of the worker's home country. Participants do not need a new work permit to change employers as long as the new employer has a valid LMIA.

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.



Country of Destination
CANADA

Country of Origin
ANGUILLA, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, BARBADOS, DOMINICA, GRENADA, JAMAICA, MEXICO, MONTERRAT, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, ST. LUCIA, ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Skill
AGRICULTURE 

Skill Level
MIXED, FROM MANUAL LABORERS TO FARM MANAGERS

Timeline
1966–ONGOING

Beneficiaries
48,000 IN 2017

What impact has it had?

SAWP has brought thousands of temporary foreign workers to Canada for more than 50 years. About 20 percent of workers in Canada's agricultural sector are temporary foreign workers, particularly in the fruit, vegetables, horticulture, and nursery sectors.

Further readings

Government of Canada. n.d. "Agricultural workers—work temporarily in Canada." <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/permit/agricultural-workers-work-temporarily.html>. Accessed March 19, 2021.

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UC Davis. "Canada's Seasonal Workers Program (SAWP)." Rural Migration News Blog | Migration Dialogue. UC Davis, December 20, 2019. <https://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/blog/post/?id=2372>



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Last updated: July 2021