



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment

# BUILDING THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The Australian Government  
response to the National  
Agricultural Workforce Strategy  
December 2021









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# INTRODUCTION

Australia's agricultural production is forecast to reach \$73.0 billion in 2021-22 and the sector aims to achieve \$100 billion in farm gate output by 2030. Meeting the 2030 target will require a significant increase in productivity. This must be achieved while maintaining Australia's reputation for high quality sustainable produce. It is also key that agricultural businesses have access to a workforce that is appropriately skilled and responsive to rapid changes in the sector.

The Government is setting the foundations to support industry to achieve its 2030 goal through its Delivering Ag2030 plan. This includes investments in human capital, one of the 7 key themes of the plan, to help make sure people and their communities – right across the sector and its supply chain – have the support, infrastructure and skills they need.





# GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: ROADMAP SETS THE DIRECTION

**The Australian Government roadmap to attract, retain, upskill and modernise the agriculture workforce, released in March 2021, sets the direction for Government action to support the agriculture sector to secure, skill and realise the potential of the agriculture workforce (Figure 1).**

The roadmap outlined the Government's approach to responding to the independent National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee's *National Agricultural Workforce Strategy: Learning to excel*. The strategy highlights that Australian agriculture and its supply chains represent a 'complex and sophisticated system' that relies heavily on the quality of its people. Its 37 recommendations confirm the need for the sector to modernise its image; attract, diversify and retain the workforce; fill workforce gaps with overseas workers; and build skills and ensure the ethical and lawful treatment of agricultural workers in order to diversify and grow the workforce. The recommendations also emphasised the importance of quality, up-to-date data and innovation.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's targeted consultations with industry, state and territory government and other stakeholders acknowledged the difficulties in hiring and retaining domestic workers. It also confirmed securing, skilling and realising the potential of the agriculture workforce requires coordinated action.

Stakeholders sought government leadership and collaboration as well as foundational support, including through improved data capabilities. It was clear through consultations that addressing agriculture workforce needs remains a shared priority across state and territory governments and will continue to be a key strategic focus for all Australian agriculture ministers.

**FIGURE 1** AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ROADMAP DIRECTIONS





# AGRICULTURE A CONTINUING PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENT

The Government is prioritising workforce issues and has already addressed several recommendations in the strategy through its response to COVID-19 and by pursuing its reform agenda, such as in education and training. On 11 May 2021, as part of the 2021-22 Budget, the Government announced further initiatives to respond to the recommendations.

The Government's 2021-22 Budget investment builds on previous investments and includes significant additional initiatives to deliver the tools and foundations required for producers to achieve their goals and improve agricultural employment opportunities:



## \$25.2 MILLION

over four years for AgATTRACT, which aims to help shift perceptions of agricultural work and showcase the diverse career opportunities on offer in agriculture



## \$4.6 MILLION

over four years for AgFAIR, which aims to help agricultural employers adopt best practice workforce management and planning practices to hire and retain employees

In addition, the Government has announced reforms to two Pacific labour mobility programs. This work will align a number of requirements under the Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Labour Scheme and amalgamate the programs under a single brand; the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. The Government has also established the Australian Agriculture visa, which will complement the PALM scheme, to support Australian farmers in accessing labour both now and into the future.

These investments will boost the agriculture industry's capacity to build and train its workforce, address systemic barriers and meet increasing labour needs. These initiatives are a key part of the Government's Delivering Agriculture 2030 Package, as well as a response to the strategy.

The actions undertaken by Government to respond to the strategy and address the workforce needs of the agriculture sector that have arisen due to COVID-19 are outlined against the roadmap themes (refer to Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4). The response to the recommendations in the strategy is contained in Attachment 1.

The breadth and diversity of the recommendations mean they cover responsibilities of federal, state and territory governments, as well as industry and a range of other organisations.

The Government cannot tackle these challenges alone and all stakeholders need to consider the recommendations and take appropriate action to achieve the objectives of the strategy. Importantly, the sector and individual agribusinesses will retain a central role in managing their own workforces.







# GOVERNMENT ACTION: SECURING THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

Modern agriculture offers a diverse range of career opportunities, but community perceptions have not kept pace with the growth of career options in the sector. The Government recognises that industry plays the central role in changing perceptions and attracting people to work in the sector. Government provides the necessary supports and addresses key blockages and market failures.

**TABLE 1 GOVERNMENT ACTION TO SECURE THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE**

ROADMAP DIRECTIONS	GOVERNMENT ACTION
<b>Recognise and support initiatives to attract and diversify the agriculture workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>AgCAREERSTART pilot</i> – \$5.3 million to support the sector to attract more workers by seed funding a structured and supported pilot gap year program for young Australians to experience work in agriculture. This aligns to recommendations 13 and 19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous school leavers and Indigenous farming businesses will be encouraged to participate in the pilot program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Incentives to take up agriculture work</i> – up to \$6,000 is available for Australian workers and up to \$2,000 for temporary visa holders with general working rights in Australia through AgMove and temporary changes to the Youth Allowance (student) and ABSTUDY independence eligibility criteria support and encourage take-up of agricultural work.</li> <li>• <i>Understanding perceptions and worker experiences</i> – \$1.3 million for research into views on agriculture jobs and worker experiences to help the sector attract, retain and diversify its workforce. This aligns to recommendations 10 and 18.</li> <li>• <i>Harvest Trail Service reforms</i> – expanded to cover all major horticulture areas, introduced incentives to increase take up of seasonal work by Australians and trialling innovative approaches to encourage Australians to take up seasonal work opportunities. This aligns to recommendation 26.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> These initiatives have been further bolstered by other Government initiatives such as the JobMaker Hiring Credit to encourage job creation.</p>
<b>Recognise and support initiatives to retain workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>AgUP grants opportunity</i> – \$10.1 million to support industry-led projects that create opportunities for upskilling and career progression. This aligns to recommendations 18 and 19.</li> <li>• <i>National Agriculture Workers' Code</i> – agreed in September 2020 to enable movement of agricultural workers across state and territory borders.</li> </ul>
<b>Recognise that migrant workers will continue to play an important part in filling workforce gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Safe pathway for seasonal workers</i> – Pacific labour mobility programs resumed from September 2020, building on a trial to support the mango industry in the Northern Territory. The Government has also announced that there will be an extra 12,500 workers recruited in the period between August 2021 and March 2022.</li> <li>• <i>Streamlining Pacific labour mobility programs</i> – the Government has announced the first stage of reforms to streamline the Pacific labour mobility programs to ensure their potential is maximised. This aligns to recommendation 21.</li> <li>• <i>Australian Agriculture visa</i> – the Government has established an Australian Agriculture visa, with the regulations for the visa established on 30 September 2021.</li> <li>• <i>Visa changes</i> – the Government has made temporary visa changes and relaxed visa conditions so workers already here can stay longer and more visa holders will be able to work in agriculture.</li> </ul>
<b>Build awareness of career paths in agriculture and seasonal job opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Understanding perceptions and worker experiences</i> – \$1.3 million for research to understand worker experiences and how agriculture jobs are viewed, to help the sector grow and diversify its workforce. This aligns to recommendations 10 and 18.</li> <li>• <i>Mapping agriculture career pathways</i> – \$2.7 million for the National Careers Institute to provide career information and mapping activities that will highlight the opportunities available in agriculture. This aligns to recommendation 11.</li> </ul>

# GOVERNMENT ACTION: SKILLING THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

Ensuring agricultural workers have the skills they need is central to the continued growth and success of the sector. The AgUP grants program will deliver grants that provide more opportunities for upskilling and career progression in the agriculture sector. These opportunities will make it easier and more appealing for workers to remain in the agriculture sector.

**TABLE 2 GOVERNMENT ACTION TO SKILL THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE**

ROADMAP DIRECTIONS	GOVERNMENT ACTION
<b>Work with the training and education sector and extension providers to ensure people have the skills, knowledge and capabilities to succeed in modern agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>AgUP grants opportunity</i> – \$10.1 million to support projects that create opportunities for upskilling and career progression in the agricultural workforce. This aligns to recommendations 18 and 19.</li> <li>• <i>Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy</i> – following the release of the National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement on 11 October 2021, the government is developing a Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy. The strategy will set the foundations for digital growth across the sector. This aligns to recommendations 2, 7 and 34.</li> <li>• <i>Future Drought Fund Farm Business Resilience program</i> – over \$75 million to provide subsidised learning and development opportunities in strategic business management, farm risk management and decision-making, natural resource management, and personal and social resilience. This program is delivered in partnership with state and territory governments, and uses a range of delivery mechanisms including building on existing training and education sector, extension provider and industry-based programs. This aligns to recommendation 2.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure the national training system is regularly reviewed and updated by industry to ensure quality training remains available and reflects emerging skill needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vocational Education and Training (VET) reforms</i> – through the <i>Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform</i>, all governments have committed to finalising a new National Skills Agreement by mid-2022. The Agreement commits governments to immediate reforms that will strengthen the training system, including simplifying, rationalising and streamlining of national VET qualifications. VET industry engagement will be considered in the context of these reforms. This aligns to recommendations 12, 14, 16 and 17.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> VET reforms will complement reforms in higher education which saw Australian agriculture students paying significantly less for agriculture degrees from 2021. Early data from universities indicates enrolments in agriculture, environment and related studies have increased by over 13% from 2020 to 2021.</p>
<b>Embrace innovation to grow industry competitiveness and productivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement</i> – released on 11 October 2021, the Policy Statement will position the agricultural innovation system to deliver maximum benefits to industry and the broader economy. This aligns to recommendations 2, 7 and 34.</li> <li>• <i>Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy</i> – following the release of the National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement on 11 October 2021, the government is developing a Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy. The strategy will set the foundations for widespread uptake of digital technologies across the sector. This aligns to recommendations 2, 7 and 34.</li> <li>• <i>Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs</i> – \$66 million to establish eight collaboration-focused hubs where researchers, primary producers and community groups can work together to enhance drought resilient practices and become flagship precincts for agricultural innovation. Additional funding announced in the 2021-22 Budget increased total investment in the hubs to \$79 million to 2023-24 and will support the hubs to harness innovation to drive development and adoption of drought resilient technologies and practices. Under the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, the Australian Government has recently announced an additional \$20 million will be provided to the hubs over an 18-month period (from 2021-22 to 2022-23). This funding will allow the hubs to expand beyond their current remit of drought resilience and undertake broader agricultural innovation activities in the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This aligns to recommendation 8.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> This builds on existing measures available to businesses that support technology adoption. For example, eligible businesses can claim an immediate deduction of the business portion of the cost of an asset in the year the asset is first used or installed ready for use. This program has been extended in the 2021-22 Budget. This aligns to recommendation 6.</p>



# GOVERNMENT ACTION: REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

Management practices and the work environments not only affect how attractive a job is to potential new hires, but they also have a significant impact on job satisfaction once in a role. Agricultural businesses must improve workforce management and planning practices and provide safe and ethical workplaces in order to hire and retain the right people.

**TABLE 3** GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REALISE THE POTENTIAL OF THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

ROADMAP DIRECTIONS	GOVERNMENT ACTION
Recognise and support initiatives to ensure workers are treated fairly and ethically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fast-track Fair Farms</i> – \$3.6 million to continue to roll out and fast track the uptake of the Fair Farms program. This aligns to recommendation 9. This will include additional support for Fair Farms to enable workplace diversity in their program to demonstrate fair employment practices.</li> <li>• <i>Labour hire regulation</i> – the Government is committed to implementing a national approach to labour hire regulation, without imposing unnecessary regulatory burden. This aligns to recommendations 27 and 28. The Government accepted in principle recommendation 14 of the Migrant Workers’ Taskforce to implement a national labour hire registration scheme for high risk sectors to drive behavioural change among labour hire operators, without causing major disruption to the entire labour hire industry. There are currently four state and territory labour hire licencing schemes in place, namely, in the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. The Government is actively working with all states and territories to identify opportunities to harmonise labour hire regulation, to learn from the experiences of states and territories that have implemented licensing schemes, and identify best practice approaches. In relation to recommendation 29, labour hire companies are already required to utilise Single Touch Payroll for employees.</li> <li>• This work builds on the substantial efforts of the Government to improve protections for all vulnerable workers, including migrant workers. This includes the measures introduced through the <i>Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Vulnerable Workers) Act 2017</i>, which increased civil penalties and strengthened investigative powers for the Fair Work Ombudsman. The Government has also provided the Fair Work Ombudsman with additional funding for awareness raising, education and compliance activities. The Fair Work Ombudsman and Australian Border Force undertake activities to support workers, including those under the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme. The Australian Border Force also leads a national operation targeting labour hire intermediaries exploiting vulnerable onshore foreign workers.</li> <li>• The exposure draft Migration Amendment (Protecting Migrant Workers) Bill 2021 includes an obligation for employers to ensure relevant Department of Home Affairs systems are used to verify the immigration status and work rights of migrant workers before allowing them to work.</li> <li>• From 1 November 2020, up to 19 Pacific Labour Mobility Officers are being deployed across Australia to undertake additional welfare, monitoring, compliance and accommodation checks to support the SWP. On 29 March 2021, The Salvation Army was selected following an open tender to deliver Community Connections. The contract with The Salvation Army was signed on 26 March 2021 and provides \$1 million over 2 years to boost Pacific and Timorese workers’ connections with local communities.</li> <li>• Harvest Trail Services providers, contracted to deliver specialised job placement services for horticulture and broadacre sectors, are required to place job seekers only with reputable employers who are compliant with workplace relations and work safety requirements and raise awareness about pay and conditions required under the <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i>.</li> </ul>
Encourage improvements in workforce planning, and management practices and capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Modernising workplace practices</i> – almost \$1 million to provide practical support to agricultural employers and implement modern workforce management and planning practices. This aligns to recommendation 9.</li> </ul>

# GOVERNMENT ACTION: LEADERSHIP AND FOUNDATION WORK

The agricultural workforce is a shared responsibility. While the sector is primarily responsible for managing its workforce, governments support the sector by helping to address market failures and barriers. For example, migration programs – such as the newly established PALM scheme – provide alternative labour sources where local labour supply is insufficient and relocation assistance helps individuals to take up opportunities in regional locations.

The pandemic has shown the importance of leadership, collaboration and coordination to address agricultural workforce issues. National Cabinet, together with regular engagement at the official level between states and the Commonwealth and with other agencies and industry are essential.

A key aspect of government support is the collection of data on the agricultural workforce in order to understand and respond to the needs of the agricultural labour market now and into the future.

**TABLE 4 GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND FOUNDATION WORK**

ROADMAP DIRECTIONS	GOVERNMENT ACTION
<b>Foundation work includes improving data and modelling to understand agricultural workforce supply and demand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improving labour forecasting</i> – \$1.5 million for the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) to source labour forecasts from relevant farmers and support data integration projects to explore other avenues for improving the understanding of the agricultural workforce. This builds on investments made by Government in 2018 to source labour use information from farmers. This aligns to recommendations 32 and 33.</li> <li>• <i>Updating agriculture sector occupations</i> – \$4.2 million for the Australian Bureau of Statistics to update agriculture sector occupations in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). The update will be used to produce experimental counts from the 2021 Census of the agricultural workforce in late 2022 and for official Labour Force data from late 2023. This aligns to recommendation 35.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership and collaboration with jurisdictions, industry and supply chains integrated into implementation governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Agriculture is a priority for all governments</i> – COVID-19 response and recovery is one of four priorities for the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (formerly Agriculture Ministers' Forum) in 2021. Agricultural workforce supply and industry issues are a critical part of this focus. This aligns with recommendations 1 and 36.</li> <li>• <i>Focus on collaboration</i> – The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has established regular Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) meetings on workforce matters across the economy. This IDC supplements the existing formal and informal collaboration between government departments and agencies, which has proven to be effective in the timely sharing of critical information, through a range of formal and informal channels. This aligns with recommendation 37.</li> </ul>
<b>Industry and supply chain actors leading action in key areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Engaging with governments and the sector</i> – while the Government will continue to play a leadership/coordinating role, specific recommendations (notably 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 15 and 31) will be referred to relevant independent bodies, industry, supply chain and state and territory governments for consideration and action. Implementation of 2021-22 Budget measures will be informed by consultation.</li> </ul>



# THE WAY FORWARD

The Government is committed to working with the agriculture sector to attract, retain and upskill workers and build a sustainable workforce. We have taken decisive action throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to support the immediate workforce needs of the sector, and through the 2021-22 Budget we have identified opportunities to grow the agricultural workforce in the medium to longer term.

The Government will continue to support the creation of jobs and economic growth as the agricultural sector seeks to increase productivity and work towards its \$100 billion 2030 goal.

To stay up to date on the 2021-22 Budget measures, including opportunities to be part of the AgCAREERSTART pilot and apply for future AgUP grant rounds, **visit [awe.gov.au/agricultural-workforce](https://awe.gov.au/agricultural-workforce)**.



# NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Government appointed the independent National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee in December 2019 to develop a *National Agricultural Workforce Strategy*. Following consultations with over 300 organisations, the strategy was provided to the Government on 22 December 2020 with 37 recommendations.

The strategy was released with the *Australian Government roadmap to attract, retain, upskill and modernise the agricultural workforce* on 5 March 2021, which outlines the Government's vision for the sector.

The Government has carefully considered the strategy and supports in principle many of the recommendations. The recommendations align with a number of Government reforms and initiatives already introduced, including in response to COVID-19.

Many of the recommendations require cooperation and collaboration between different levels of government, co-design with industry and delivery in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. In this regard, recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 15 and 31 have been referred to state and territory governments, industry or other stakeholders for consideration. The response to the strategy recommendations is outlined in Attachment 1.





## ATTACHMENT 1 NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION	AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p><b>01</b> The Committee recommends that at their next meeting, the Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) endorse the main message of this strategy, namely that Australian AgriFood is a complex and sophisticated system that will thrive in the 21st century only if all its component parts give top priority to continuous capability development of their entire workforce, including owners, managers and workers.</p>	<p><b>SUPPORT</b></p> <p>Following the Conran Review into COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums, AGMIN has been replaced by the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM).</p> <p>Addressing agricultural workforce matters is a shared priority for all governments, including through National Cabinet, and will continue to be a key strategic focus for all Australian agriculture ministers. AMM has made COVID-19 response and recovery one of its four priorities. Agricultural workforce issues form a critical part of this focus.</p>
<p><b>02</b> The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission the development of flexible, online learning modules to build the capability of farmers, fishers, foresters and advisory (extension) services to improve AgriFood productivity through environmental sustainability – including carbon neutral agricultural production.</p>	<p><b>SUPPORT IN PART</b></p> <p>The Government is delivering the Future Drought Fund Farm Business Resilience program (\$75.96 million over 4 years) in partnership with state and territory governments. The program provides subsidised training to farmers to build their strategic management capacity to prepare for and manage risk adapt to a changing climate, and improve the farm business's economic, environmental, and social resilience. Learning and development opportunities include strategic business management, farm risk management and decision-making, natural resource management, and personal and social resilience. A range of delivery methods are being used to ensure that the learning and support is tailored to the specific needs of the farm business, including online delivery.</p> <p>Through the Rural R&amp;D for Profit program, the Government has supported flexible delivery of extension services that meet primary producers' needs and recognise the growing role of private service delivery.</p> <p>The Government is delivering a National Agricultural Innovation Agenda to improve our agricultural innovation system. As part of the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, the Government has developed a National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement that includes four new National Agricultural Innovation Priorities. One of the priorities is to support Australia to be a mature adopter, developer and exporter of digital agriculture by 2030.</p> <p>In contribution to this digital priority, the Government is developing a Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy to help set the foundations for the widespread adoption of digital technologies across agriculture, forestry and fisheries as well as grow the Australian agtech industry.</p> <p>The Government is providing funding for initial investments designed to focus the agricultural innovation system, including \$2.8 million for Agricultural Innovation Australia to develop investment strategies to support delivery of the four new priorities.</p> <p>The recommendation has been referred to the Rural Research and Development Corporations and state and territory governments for consideration of any further appropriate action that builds on this earlier work.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

03	<p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government encourage all corporate businesses including suppliers, retailers and manufacturers and all companies benefiting from produce of the sea and land to play a larger role in capability development of the AgriFood workforce through co-designed partnership programs such as the Coles Nurture Fund and Woolworths Organic Growth Fund.</p>	<b>SUPPORT</b>	<p>The recommendation has been referred to the Australian Food and Grocery Council for consideration of further appropriate action.</p>
04	<p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission a brief review comparing food technology courses in North American, European and Australian universities to set a best-in-class benchmark for Australian AgriFood capability development.</p>	<b>DO NOT SUPPORT</b>	<p>The recommendation has been referred to the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture and Skills Impact to ensure it is considered by both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors.</p>
05	<p>The Committee recommends that governments recognise on-farm investment in value-add processing facilities with appropriate rezoning of land to support the growth of skilled AgriFood jobs in rural and regional Australia – for example through the designation of agricultural industrial zoning.</p>	<b>NOTED</b>	<p>Land use planning is a matter for state and territory and local governments. The recommendation has been referred to state and territory governments for consideration of appropriate action.</p>
06	<p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government extend indefinitely, for field robotics and other high-end AgriTech, the full tax write-offs announced in the Commonwealth Budget 2020-21.</p>	<b>DO NOT SUPPORT</b>	<p>The 2020-21 Budget included temporary full expensing to support new investment and deliver cash flow benefits to businesses. As part of the 2021-22 Budget, it was announced this measure will be extended to 30 June 2023. Once the concession ends, assets will be depreciated under pre-existing depreciation settings, noting that these settings are not industry-specific. Some expenditure on these items may be eligible under other permanent tax incentives.</p>
07	<p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider collaborative approaches, including co-funding models with state and territory governments, to build knowledge of AgriTech developments among advisory (extension) services and their staff.</p>	<b>SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE</b>	<p>The Government is delivering a National Agricultural Innovation Agenda to improve our agricultural innovation system. As part of the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, the Government has developed a National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement that includes four new National Agricultural Innovation Priorities. One of the priorities is to support Australia to be a mature adopter, developer and exporter of digital agriculture by 2030.</p> <p>In contribution to this digital priority, the Government is developing a Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy to help set the foundations for the widespread adoption of digital technologies across agriculture, forestry and fisheries as well as grow the Australian agtech industry.</p> <p>The Government is providing funding for initial investments designed to focus the agricultural innovation system, including \$2.8 million for Agricultural Innovation Australia to develop investment strategies to support delivery of the four new National Agricultural Innovation Priorities.</p> <p>The recommendation has been referred to the Rural Research and Development Corporations and state and territory governments for consideration of appropriate action.</p>



## RECOMMENDATION

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**08** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government's Drought Resilience Research and Adoption hubs make strong links to AgriFood workforce capability development and extension.

### SUPPORT

The Government is investing \$66 million to establish eight Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs across regional Australia. Each hub will focus on collaboration. They will:

- provide networks for researchers, primary producers and community groups to work together to enhance drought resilient practices within their focus region
- become flagship precincts for agricultural innovation.

Hubs will be made up of research providers and research users with a regional focus and will address local drought resilience research, development, extension, adoption and innovation priorities.

Additional funding announced in the 2021-22 Budget increased total investment in the hubs to \$79 million to 2023-24 and will support the hubs to harness innovation to drive development and adoption of drought resilient technologies and practices.

Under the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, the Australian Government has recently announced an additional \$20 million will be provided to the hubs over an 18-month period (from 2021-22 to 2022-23). This funding will allow the hubs to expand beyond their current remit of drought resilience and undertake broader agricultural innovation activities in the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

**09** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in partnership with the state and territory governments, establish an 'Employer of Choice' academy and award scheme to raise awareness of, and to demonstrate, leading human resource and workplace management practices in the AgriFood sector.

### SUPPORT IN PART

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has funded Growcom's Fair Farms program to provide farmers with support and training to encourage fair and responsible employment practices in Australian horticulture. The program also supports horticulture businesses to demonstrate their commitment to fair employment practices and help build and improve the horticulture industry's image and reputation.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the Government announced \$3.6 million in funding to fast-track horticulture businesses through the Fair Farms program. This will include additional support for Fair Farms to enable workplace diversity in their program to demonstrate fair employment practices.

The Government has also announced funding of \$1 million for a program of work that provides practical support to help agricultural employers implement modern workforce planning and management practices.

The recommendation has also been referred to state and territory governments for consideration of further appropriate action.

**10** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with the AgriFood sector, commission research on community perceptions about work in the AgriFood sector to inform an evidence-based campaign encouraging people to enter the sector. The Australian Defence Force and Minerals Council of Australia campaigns could be models.

### SUPPORT IN PART

To improve the sector's capacity to hire and retain workers and measure the effectiveness of interventions, the Government has provided \$1.3 million in the 2021-22 Budget to undertake research to understand worker experiences and how agriculture jobs are viewed and will share the results with governments and industry.

Industry bodies and Rural Research and Development Corporations periodically undertake surveys to gather community opinions on a wide variety of topics related to production and consumption of products and the Government will encourage them to collaborate on ways to encourage new entrants to the agriculture industry.

- 11** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission the development of a comprehensive interactive digitised map of the AgriFood workforce to demonstrate the breadth of jobs, careers and education and training opportunities.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop workforce diversity case studies to demonstrate AgriFood workforce opportunities to women and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and incorporate these case studies into the interactive digitised map of the AgriFood workforce.

#### SUPPORT

Through the Your Career website ([yourcareer.gov.au](http://yourcareer.gov.au)), the National Careers Institute provides clear and simple careers information and support for people of all ages and at all career stages to better plan and manage their career. This includes information about a broad range of agricultural occupations.

To ensure career advice and agriculture data reflects modern agricultural occupations, the Government has announced \$2.7 million from 2021-22 to support development of a comprehensive, up-to-date map of agricultural occupations which will be accessible through an interactive, user driven experience on the Your Career website (to be led by the National Careers Institute). This project will involve extensive consultation with industry to understand the full range of agricultural occupations available, identify entry points and occupation pathways, gather information on education and experience requirements and data on income.

To improve the sector's capacity to hire and retain workers and measure the effectiveness of interventions, the Government will also provide funding to undertake research of existing agricultural workers to understand what attracted them to the sector, what they value about the sector and what can be improved. This information will then be shared with industry to identify the improvements required to hire and retain agricultural workers.

- 12** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in collaboration with the state and territory governments, ensure that the expenditure of the Skilling Australians Fund levies benefit the whole AgriFood workforce.

#### NOTED

Vocational education and training (VET) industry engagement is being considered in the context of current reforms to vocational education and training being progressed under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform.

The current National Partnership on the Skilling Australians Fund (SAF) includes a focus on the needs of industries and sectors which have a high future growth potential. Agriculture is listed as one of these areas.

States and territories determine where funding should be directed but are required to demonstrate they have consulted with industry to determine what projects should be supported under SAF. Depending on the approach taken by states and territories, projects are not necessarily industry specific (for example, instead focusing on youth) and therefore support multiple sectors.

- 13** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission a pilot of the Australian Land and Environment Service to provide an opportunity for young Australians to engage with and work in agriculture and land management.

#### SUPPORT IN PART

Cotton Australia launched a Cotton Gap program in 2017-18 to expose school leavers to the diverse range of careers available in the Australian cotton industry. The program has successfully engaged with the next generation of workers to help secure a skilled and enthusiastic workforce for the future.

The Government will, through its AgCAREERSTART pilot, provide \$5.3 million to support the sector to establish a national agriculture gap year program aimed at young Australians for 2022 and 2023. The program will pilot a structured employment program on a working farm for school leavers.

Indigenous school leavers and Indigenous farming businesses will be encouraged to participate in the pilot program.



**14** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish skills organisation pilots for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry, food and logistics industries. The forward work program for these pilot organisations should include activities such as:

- Developing stronger relationships with registered training organisations to improve the delivery of qualifications and enhance outcomes, for example by:
  - better aligning training and assessment with the expectations of employers
  - trialling alternative assessment and delivery models to address issues with rural and regional delivery
- Strengthening links between schools and industry
- Strengthening links between the VET and higher education sector
- Promoting the use of skills sets within training packages

Considering ways to address issues in recruitment and retention in the sector.

#### NOTED

VET industry engagement is being considered in the context of current reforms to vocational education and training being progressed under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform.

As part of the 2021–22 Budget, the Government will provide an additional \$149.2 million to establish and support new arrangements to enhance the role of industry in VET. To achieve this, a network of Industry Clusters will be established by January 2023, and will be responsible for workforce planning and training product development, implementation, promotion and monitoring, and industry stewardship.

**15** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government provide seed funding to establish an AgriFood Tertiary Education Council, modelled on the Minerals Tertiary Education Council, and invite participation from leading AgriFood employers, universities via the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture, and the rural research and development corporations.

#### DO NOT SUPPORT

This recommendation has been referred to the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture, Rural Research and Development Corporations and National Farmers Federation for consideration of an industry-led, collaborative AgriFood Tertiary Education Council model.

**16** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a task force with state and territory governments, the National Farmers' Federation, the Australian Forest Products Association and Seafood Industry Australia in order to develop a flagship AgriFood apprenticeship and traineeship scheme with training providers. The scheme should address issues of employer demand and allow flexibility for employers such as the sharing of apprentices and/or trainees amongst small to medium businesses.

#### DO NOT SUPPORT

The Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform, agreed between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, commits to immediate reforms that will strengthen the training system, including simplifying, rationalising and streamlining national VET qualifications.

## RECOMMENDATION

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**17** To increase the responsiveness of the education and training system to industry needs, the Committee recommends that the state and territory governments establish multiparty AgriFood labour advisory committees to provide leadership in the development of demand driven capability programs across the AgriFood sector. The committees should comprise AgriFood business leaders and thought leaders in tertiary and vocational training.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government match any state and territory funds allocated to such AgriFood labour advisory committees to give them enough resources for these programs.

### DO NOT SUPPORT

Through the *Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform*, all governments have committed to finalising a new *National Skills Agreement* by mid-2022. VET industry engagement will be considered in the context of current reforms to vocational education and training being progressed under the *Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform*.

**18** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission research and analysis to support small and medium enterprises and business leaders in evaluating novel approaches to workforce organisation and job design, leading to recommendations for possible AgriFood workforce strategies that enhance employee attraction and create opportunities for business growth or change.

### SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE

In the 2021-22 Budget the Government announced a number of measures to support employers to hire and retain workers, including:

- \$5.3 million for AgCAREERSTART; a structured and supported pilot program enabling young Australians to undertake a gap year in the agriculture industry
- \$10.1 million to deliver the AgUP grants program to provide more opportunities to develop career progression pathways and upskill, train and mentor workers
- \$1.3 million for research on community perceptions and worker experiences to build a strong understanding of modern agriculture
- Agricultural career mapping to ensure career advice reflects modern agricultural occupations
- \$1 million for delivery of resources to provide practical support to agricultural employers to implement modern workforce management and planning practices.

**19** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a large-scale, multi-year fund to support innovative, collaborative projects to attract, retain and upskill the AgriFood workforce.

### SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE

The Government will, through its AgCAREERSTART pilot, provide \$5.3 million to support the sector to establish a national agriculture gap year program aimed at young Australians for 2022 and 2023. The program will pilot a structured employment program on a working farm for school leavers.

The Government will also provide \$10.1 million for the AgUP grants program, which will co-fund industry initiatives to develop career progression pathways and upskill, train and mentor workers.



- 20** The Committee recommends that, in order to make it easier for a person on JobSeeker to accept seasonal agricultural work, a system be devised whereby willing AgriFood employers would advise Services Australia that person would be working for them for a designated period.

During that designated period:

- all the person's JobSeeker payments would cease completely. They would restart automatically at the end of the designated period.
- Family Tax Benefit calculations and rent assistance payments would not be affected by any seasonal work payments.

#### DO NOT SUPPORT

This recommendation may leave some JobSeeker Payment recipients financially worse off in comparison to existing arrangements and may discourage workers to take up agricultural work. The priority focus for the Government will continue to be that people are better off if they take up work.

- 21** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in close collaboration with the Seasonal Worker Programme Advisory Group, continue to refine the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme to:

- mobilise overseas workers more effectively across the country
- improve accessibility to the program for smaller business and for businesses with short, intense harvests
- improve portability of overseas workers among farms, commodities and regions in the program
- expand the length of stay for the Seasonal Worker Programme to 12 months
- look for synergies and quadripartite approaches to bring the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme closer together and reduce administrative burden where possible.

#### SUPPORT

The Government is introducing an integrated approach to labour mobility, with the first stage of reforms to the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) making the programs easier to access, protecting worker welfare and better meeting the workforce needs of regional Australia. The Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) website has been established for employers to apply to the PLS and SWP through a single application. The SWP and PLS have also been made more aligned and flexible through the introduction of a number of changes including allowing PLS workers to be recruited in more locations across Australia by reducing postcode restrictions, increasing the validity of labour market testing from 6 months to 12 months and removing the upper age limit of 45 years for PLS workers, aligning with the age criteria for the SWP.

Over 13,000 workers have been successfully recruited and mobilised in a COVID-safe way through the two programs since the re-start of Pacific labour mobility recruitment in 2020. This has been achieved by the Government working closely with state and territory governments and industry. The Government has also announced the doubling of Pacific workers in Australia, with an extra 12,500 to be recruited in the period from August 2021 to March 2022.

The PALM Advisory Group will provide advice on arrangements and settings for Pacific labour mobility in Australia. It is being established in response to consultations with stakeholders on improving, streamlining and aligning the SWP and PLS.

**22** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a 'fit and proper person' registration process for employers seeking to employ working holiday makers (visa subclass 417 and 462). This registration should include:

- a database of registered employers who wish to access working holiday makers
- verification that the employer has not been prosecuted for breaches of relevant laws administered by the Fair Work Ombudsman or the Department of Home Affairs, and is not subject to any current compliance action
- an agreement by the employer to list job vacancies on the Harvest Trail Services website
- the opportunity for an employer to be de-registered (and thus unable to access working holiday makers for the next five years) should they be prosecuted for breaches of relevant laws administered by the Fair Work Ombudsman or the Department of Home Affairs.

**23** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government require all 417 and 462 visa holders, prior to arrival in Australia, to apply for an Australian tax file number. Information should be provided to 417 and 462 visa holders in their own language, on their rights and entitlements as migrant workers in Australian workplaces, and on how to take action if they are not being treated ethically and lawfully.

**24** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government require that:

- working holiday makers attend an in-person induction prior to being employed in the AgriFood sector. Such inductions should be identical to the quadripartite model used in the Seasonal Worker Programme. These inductions should be conducted at the Regional Harvest Trail Services offices.

Registered employers ensure working holiday maker visa holders attend these in-person inductions.

## NOTED

The Government is committed to ensuring that employers meet their obligations under Australian law.

All national system employers are required by law to provide the proper entitlements to their employees, regardless of their visa status, and rectify any issues as soon as possible.

The Government has taken steps to help ensure all employees receive their correct entitlements. This includes migrant workers, who are covered by the same workplace laws, entitlements and protections, such as the National Employment Standards, relevant awards or agreements, redress for wage underpayments and general protections against workplace discrimination and harassment, as Australian citizens and permanent residents.

Under the *Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Vulnerable Workers) Act 2017*, the Government increased the maximum civil penalties for certain 'serious contraventions' of the Fair Work Act 2009 by tenfold, increased the maximum civil penalties for record keeping breaches and strengthened the Fair Work Ombudsman's (FWO) powers to investigate instances of alleged underpayment.

Since 2016, the Government has also committed more than \$160 million in new funding for the regulator, the FWO, to monitor and promote compliance with workplace laws. In the last 5 years the FWO has recovered over \$370 million for underpaid workers.

The horticulture sector is a priority sector for the FWO's compliance and enforcement activities. The FWO developed and promotes a range of online, industry specific resources which are available in more than 25 languages in one online hub called the Horticulture Showcase. The Horticulture Showcase provides growers and workers with information and assistance on a range of topics including pay and piecework rates, hours of work and overtime, deductions for accommodation, transport and job finding, and ending employment. It also includes a page with information tailored for migrant workers.

The Visa Entitlement Verification Online system (VEVO) allows visa holders, employers and other registered organisations to check visa conditions, including work rights.

The exposure draft Migration Amendment (Protecting Migrant Workers) Bill 2021 includes an obligation for employers to ensure relevant Department of Home Affairs systems are used to verify the immigration status and work rights of migrant workers before allowing them to work.

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program is a cultural exchange program, which enables young people to travel in Australia for extended periods and to support themselves during their stay with short-term employment in any industry. During their stay, WHM visa holders can work as much or as little as they choose in full-time, part-time, casual, paid or voluntary work. The program is usually reciprocal, allowing young Australians to travel and work under similar arrangements in partner countries. WHM visa holders are not required to register their employment or location.

A requirement for WHMs to register for an Australian tax file number prior to arrival in Australia would create difficulties for future WHMs and may discourage potential travellers. This is particularly relevant in the context of work not being a requirement for the WHM program with many WHMs choosing to holiday in Australia rather than work.

Since 1 December 2015, applicants for a subsequent WHM visa are required to provide evidence that they were remunerated in accordance with the relevant Australian legislation and awards for any specified work.



- 25** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government allow a one-off regularisation of undocumented AgriFood workers.

#### DO NOT SUPPORT

The Government has stated there will not be an amnesty for illegal foreign workers (unlawful non-citizens or non-citizens who work in breach of work-related visa conditions). The focus is on ensuring that job opportunities in Australia are for Australians and migrant workers who are here lawfully, with appropriate work rights. These workers can access and take up available roles to help meet the short-term needs of the agriculture sector.

Despite the closure of the Australian border, pull factors encouraging illegal immigration are still relevant.

Regularising the status of existing AgriFood illegal migrant workers is unlikely to attract new workers to the industry; further, academic research indicates that it may in fact provide an incentive for existing workers to move to metropolitan areas where previously they could not work due to their unlawful status or breaches of their visa conditions.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all employers, labour hire intermediaries and sponsors continue to comply with Australian laws, for a fair and safe experience for migrant workers.

- 26** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop an app to promote seasonal job opportunities, building on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's work on a digital employment service model for job seekers.

The Committee considers there could also be scope for extending this recommendation to support the coordination of job seekers across the whole AgriFood sector, including allied agricultural supply chain and freight logistics jobs more broadly.

The Committee recommends that the app include regionally relevant information on accommodation, services and work rights, and that this information be available in multiple languages.

#### NOTED

The Government has recently expanded the Harvest Trail Services to better assist farmers and workers. The Harvest Trail website can be accessed on smart phones as well as via the jobsearch app. It also directs workers to the FWO's website, the Horticultural Showcase and storyboards with short videos in more than 25 languages for information on workplace rights and obligations.

The National Harvest Guide published on the Harvest Trail website provides information about harvest locations across Australia including information about accommodation options in more than 11 towns listed in the guide. The guide is updated quarterly.

## RECOMMENDATION

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**27** The Committee recommends that all state and territory governments enact mirror legislation to regulate labour hire providers operating in their jurisdictions. This legislation could mirror the *Labour Hire Licensing Act 2017* (Qld). If this does not occur within 12 months, the Australian Government should establish national legislation for mandatory regulation of labour hire companies.

**28** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government regulate that any director of a labour hire company be a permanent resident of Australia.

**29** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government include labour hire companies under single-touch payroll provisions.

**30** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a memorandum of understanding between the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Department of Home Affairs to allow for better coordination and to act as a deterrent for individuals and companies who operate unlawfully in AgriFood workforce matters.

**31** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government encourage all supermarkets to commission and fund random independent audits at all levels of the supply chains such as for the SEDEX and Fair Farms programs.

**32** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an analysis of the number of long-term AgriFood jobs in each region of Australia, and the future growth expected in these jobs.

The Committee considers this analysis will support the work of the Agriculture Workforce Data Analysis Unit.

### SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE

The Government is committed to implementing a national approach to labour hire regulation and is working with states and territories to identify opportunities to harmonise labour hire regulation, without adding undue regulatory burden on businesses. Commonwealth and state and territory Industrial Relations Ministers have tasked senior officials to provide a report by 20 December 2021 on opportunities for national harmonisation of labour hire regulation building on the experiences of jurisdictions with existing labour hire licensing schemes.

Labour hire companies are already required to utilise Single Touch Payroll for employees.

### NOTED

The Department of Home Affairs will consider opportunities for closer collaboration and coordination across government, including with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, to deter individuals and companies from operating unlawfully in workforce matters.

### SUPPORT

This is a matter for further consideration by the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) and has been referred to the AFGC for appropriate action. We note that all of the major supermarket chains have ethical supply policies in place that manage supply chain risks, have provided reports to Department of Home Affairs under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* and utilise SEDEX and Fair Farms programs to help manage risks. Further current supermarket audit requirements include workforce issues.

### SUPPORT

In 2018 under the 'Seasonal Agriculture Labour Demand and Supply' measure the Government provided funding to ABARES to source labour data from farmers and to explore other datasets to improve understanding of the agricultural workforce.

ABARES has undertaken surveys of broadacre, dairy, vegetable, fruit, grape and nut farms, with the results presented using a data visualisation product to provide insight into seasonal workforce needs by region, industry and month. This work will be regularly updated and is available at [awe.gov.au/abares/research-topics/labour](http://awe.gov.au/abares/research-topics/labour).

In addition, ABARES has begun research into understanding how much of the AgriFood workforce exists beyond the farmgate and is using administrative data sources to forecast labour demand. This research involves integrating multiple datasets from different sources.

- 33** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a dedicated Agriculture Workforce Data Analysis Unit in the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to:
- develop a data architecture for government and the AgriFood sector
  - acquire, build and make available high-quality datasets
  - design and construct data models
  - develop and update workforce demand and supply methodologies
  - undertake data analytics
  - utilise agile approaches to regularly publish market updates as well as short (seasonal), medium-term and long-term forecasts by commodity and region
  - manage relationships between key stakeholders and data custodians
  - Operate as a clearing house for stakeholders.

The Committee recommends that the unit be supported by quadripartite advisory groups (representing government, industry, community and unions) to provide advice on the acquisition and analysis of data to ensure value for users.

#### DO NOT SUPPORT

A dedicated Agriculture Workforce Data Analysis Unit will not be established in the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The Government recognises the importance of workforce data to understand the supply and demand of workers in the agriculture sector. In the 2021-22 Budget the Government has provided additional funding to ABARES to improve the collection, analysis and forecasting of agricultural labour force data. ABARES has a long history of producing reliable agricultural statistics and is well regarded by industry.

ABARES is expanding research into the agricultural labour market by supplementing ongoing farm survey research with data integration, modelling and forecasting projects. These projects will involve collaboration with industry and other stakeholders to ensure they fill gaps in agricultural labour market data and are coordinated with other work.



**34** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, as part of the National Agricultural Innovation Agenda, support coordination of research, development and extension (RD&E) efforts to understand the changing nature of the AgriFood work, careers, recruitment, retention and training needs, and implications of technology development on AgriFood workforce demand and supply.

#### SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE

In the 2021-22 Budget, the Government announced funding for work to help ensure career advice and agriculture data reflects modern agricultural occupations. This includes work undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to finalise a targeted update of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) and support for the development of a comprehensive, up-to-date map of the diverse range of agricultural occupations which will be accessible through an interactive, user driven experience on the Your Career website (to be led by the National Careers Institute).

Under the agenda, the Government has developed a National Agricultural Innovation Policy Statement that includes four new Priorities. One of the priorities is to support Australia to become a leading adopter, developer and exporter of digital agriculture by 2030.

In contribution to this digital priority, the Government is also developing a Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy to help set the foundations for widespread uptake of digital technologies across agriculture, forestry and fisheries as well as position Australia as a world leading AgriTech industry.

The Government is providing funding for initial investments designed to focus the agricultural innovation system, including \$1.5 million for Agricultural Innovation Australia (AIA) to develop investment strategies to support delivery of the four new priorities.

This is in addition to the \$1.3 million the Government is providing to AIA to drive a new cross-industry approach to agricultural innovation. All 15 RDCs are founding members of AIA that will progress collaborative projects and cross-sectoral research, leverage private investment and target translation and uptake of innovation.

**35** The Committee recommends that:

- ANZSCO classifications be reviewed and expanded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, with collaboration across Government agencies, to better reflect current AgriFood occupations.
- ANZSIC classifications be reviewed and expanded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, with collaboration across Government agencies, to better reflect industry linkages across the supply chain.

The Committee recommends that in the shorter term, development of interim expanded standards that can be used by those collecting and classifying agricultural workforce data is needed. In the longer term, these should be incorporated into revisions of ANZSCO and ANZSIC.

#### SUPPORT IN-PART

ANZSCO and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) are statistical classifications jointly managed by the ABS and Stats NZ.

The ABS has worked with several government agencies to finalise a targeted update of ANZSCO, released on 23 November 2021. The ABS is also working with partner agencies to develop a new approach to maintaining the classification, allowing the ABS to be more responsive to changes in the labour market and the needs of stakeholders.

The Government provided \$4.2 million for the ABS to finalise and update agricultural occupations in ANZSCO, with more accurate data provided for the sector through dual coding of Census 2021 data to the old and new occupations (latter released as experimental data) and experimental labour force estimates until the updated ANZSCO can be reflected in official quarterly Labour Force Statistics. This work also includes designing a solution to enable customised views of ANZSCO to better meet user needs.

The ABS also recognises there is demand for a review of the ANZSIC.

The international statistical community recently agreed to review the International Standard Industry Classification (ISIC), aiming to have an updated version available for use by March 2023. ANZSIC is based on the ISIC to support international comparability of Australia's industry statistics. Any approach to updating ANZSIC will depend on the outcome of the ISIC review, noting the ABS also aims to develop a new approach to maintaining the ANZSIC, informed by lessons learnt in designing the new approach for ANZSCO.

**36** The Committee recommends that the Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) and Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC) commit to ongoing strategic discussions on the AgriFood workforce at their 6-monthly meetings.

**SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE**

Following the Conran Review into COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums, AGMIN has been replaced by the AMM. Under the Conran Review, meetings such as AMM are tasked with 2-3 specific priorities for completion within a maximum of 12 months before disbanding. The AMM is due to sunset by 1 February 2022 with any possible time-limited extension a matter for first ministers.

The AMM work program includes a COVID-19 response and recovery item as one of its four priorities. Agricultural workforce issues form a critical part of this focus, including coordinating joint activity under the National Agricultural Workforce Strategy.

Addressing agricultural workforce matters is a shared priority for all governments, including through National Cabinet, and will continue to be a key strategic focus for all Australian agriculture ministers. This work is not contingent on AMM.

**37** The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish an AgriFood Workforce Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) chaired by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to drive collaborative implementation of the Strategy recommendations and develop and implement responses to AgriFood labour supply and demand issues as they arise.

The Committee recommends that the AgriFood Workforce IDC be heavily informed by the work of the Agricultural Workforce Data Unit within the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

**SUPPORT IN-PRINCIPLE**

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has established regular IDC meetings on workforce matters across the economy. This IDC supplements the existing formal and informal collaboration between government departments and agencies, which has proven to be effective in the timely sharing of critical information.







