



Taking action to address industry's labour challenges

Kathleen Sullivan, CEO, Food and Beverage Canada — Aliments et boissons Canada

Labour is the number one issue facing Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector, with a projected shortfall of 65,000 full time workers by 2025.

The problem looks different across the country but includes both a shortage of workers and the need to ensure skills training keeps pace with our changing manufacturing processes.

The federal government's Agri-food Economic Strategy Table's 2018 Report has called on industry to increase domestic sales to \$140 billion and exports to \$85 billion by 2025 — this puts even greater pressure on our sector.

We promote Canada as a country that feeds the world. We have a responsibility to work together and find creative solutions to our labour issues, so we don't lose that reputation.

At FBC-ABC, we understand labour is complex. FBC-ABC has established a labour task force to identify priority actions and work with government to solve the industry's labour problem. The task force kicked off its work in February with a strategic planning session that identified three high priority labour initiatives for our sector:

1. **Qualified foreign workers:** Addressing on an urgent basis, the need for immigration and temporary foreign worker programs that support timely access to foreign labour to address industry's immediate labour shortages, without unnecessary administrative burden.
2. **Automation/innovation:** Developing funding programs that are not tied to "job creation," to support the introduction of automation and innovation that will improve productivity and address labour shortages.



(LtoR) Dr. Anja Geitmann, dean — faculty of agricultural and environmental sciences, McGill University; Mary Robinson, president, Canadian Federation of Agriculture; Michael Burrows, CEO, Maple Lodge Farms and co-chair FBC-ABC; Liz Jarvis, chief of staff, 4-H Canada and Chris Forbes, Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

3. Domestic skilled trades development:

Creating alternative training and accreditation models to increase the availability of relevant and required skilled trades in a timely manner.

FBC-ABC's labour task force also hosted a labour panel discussion, introduced by Chris Forbes, Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, in conjunction with Canada's Agriculture Day in Ottawa. Participants included moderator — Mary Robinson, president, Canadian Federation of Agriculture and panelists — Michael Burrows, CEO, Maple Lodge Farms and co-chair FBC-ABC, Dr. Anja Geitmann, dean — faculty of agricultural and environmental sciences, McGill University and Liz Jarvis, chief of staff, 4-H Canada.

Also on February 26, members of FBC-ABC's labour task force met in Ottawa with members of Parliament and senior officials at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and at the federal department of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

to discuss the urgent need to address industry's labour situation.

We encourage all Canadian food and beverage manufacturers to reach out to your member of Parliament to discuss your labour concerns. It is essential to ensure federal policy makers understand the full impact of this issue on your business. You can find your member of Parliament at www.elections.ca.

To learn more about FBC-ABC's labour task force contact ksullivan@fbc-abc.com. 🍓

This article is the second in a three-part series on solving the labour crisis in the Canadian food and beverage manufacturing industry.

Food and Beverage Canada — Aliments et boissons Canada is a national association representing more than 1,500 food and beverage manufacturers from across Canada. The organization strives to support a strong business environment for members and a robust food system for Canadians. fbc-abc.com



Photo: Food and Beverage Canada