NEWS RELEASE

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WORKFORCE WINDSORESSEX LAUNCHES REPORT SUPPORTING AGRI-FOOD EMPLOYERS HIRING NEWCOMERS

New report highlights the labour gaps in the agri-food industry and the employment opportunities for newcomers

WINDSOR, ON – Today, Workforce WindsorEssex released a report, *Newcomers in Agri-Food*, to identify the support that employers in the agri-food industry need to improve employment outcomes for newcomers who are interested in entering the sector. This project was funded in part through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership), a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

The agri-food industry in Canada has experienced chronic labour shortages over the past decade. In 2017, the labour gap in farm agriculture was 63,000, and it is expected to reach 123,000 by 2027. A rapidly aging population and the fact that 90% of the Canadian population live in urban areas have contributed to the challenges that the industry has faced over the years, making it the sector with the highest job vacancy rate in Canada.

The report reviews the barriers that newcomers face when they attempt to enter the industry, including language barriers, a lack of transportation, and a lack of Canadian work experience. While newcomers are often hired for entry-level hourly positions, they are not considered for long-term employment opportunities within the industry because of lengthy onboarding processes and inadequate translation/interpretation services.

There are numerous government policies that aim to support employers in the agri-food industry; however, very few are geared toward newcomers. Local employers stated that they are more than willing to hire newcomers, but they need financial support to improve translated training programs and mitigate training costs. Improved government programs can incentivize newcomers and employers alike and begin to fill the critical labour shortages that the industry has been experiencing.

To improve the hiring landscape for newcomers and fill labour gaps within the industry, recommendations for employers include: learning from Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) best practices, connecting with local employment service providers and ESL programs to meet with qualified candidates, making skill needs known to service providers and in job postings, and connecting with community or cultural organizations to meet with qualified candidates. Recommendations for jobseekers include: identifying transferable skills that can relate to a role in the agri-food sector, asking for ESL support for occupation-specific terminology, and attending in-person job fairs to meet and speak with hiring employers.

An event was held with service providers, local employers, and industry associations today to share the report's findings and to discuss as a collective how our community can increase the hiring of newcomers while supporting employers with onboarding and training needs.

QUOTES:

"The agri-food industry is an integral part of our local economy, but they continue to strain under labour shortages. Expanding employment opportunities for newcomers has the potential to fill these gaps and provide jobs for diverse groups that are motivated to work and eager to learn."

- *Kal Fakhreddin, Research Associate, Workforce WindsorEssex*

<< L'industrie agroalimentaire est une partie intégrale de notre économie locale, mais elle continue de subir des pénuries de main-d'œuvre. L'expansion des possibilités d'emploi pour les nouveaux arrivants dans cette industrie a le potentiel de combler ces pénuries et de fournir des emplois à divers groupes qui sont motivées à travailler et qui ont hâte d'apprendre. >>

- *Kal Fakhreddin, Associée de recherche, Workforce WindsorEssex*

QUICK LINKS:

- View the report at: https://www.workforcewindsoressex.com/newcomers-in-agri-food/

- Workforce WindsorEssex collects local job postings and apprenticeship postings from 55 job boards and employer websites to better understand employer demand for talent and to simplify job search via our innovative job finding tools: Job Board, Job Map, and Career Explorer.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Lindsey Rivait
Executive Assistant and Researcher
Workforce WindsorEssex
lrivait@workforcewindsoressex.com

About Workforce WindsorEssex

Workforce WindsorEssex is a workforce and community development board whose mission is to lead regional employment and community planning for the development of a strong and sustainable workforce.

Workforce WindsorEssex is an experienced leader in the development of regional labour market tools, research, guides, and events that create positive change in the local labour market while saving others time and effort. These resources, created in close coordination with employment, education, and industry partners, are designed to help jobseekers, employers, students, and educators, as well as the community, make more informed labour market decisions using locally-responsive, data-rich, and unbiased resources. To learn more about Workforce WindsorEssex and view our tools and resources, visit www.workforcewindsoressex.com.