



Factsheet: Australian Agriculture Visa (30 September 2021)

The Australian Government is developing the Australian agriculture visa to address workforce shortages in the agriculture sector.

- The visa delivers on the Government's commitment to put in place a broad ranging visa to support Australia's primary industries.
- The visa will be available to skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers across a broad range of agricultural industries, including meat processing and the fishery and forestry sectors.
- To test the arrangements, a small number of countries will initially be invited to participate in the program and send workers through bilateral agreements. Additional countries will be added over time.
- The visa is being designed in close consultation with industry and will supplement the existing Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM Scheme). This Pacific program will remain the primary scheme for meeting agricultural workforce shortages, especially this summer peak harvest season.
- Details on application eligibility requirements will be established through the program design process in consultation with the Australian agriculture sector.

More information will be made available on the DFAT website (www.dfat.gov.au/agriculturevisa) as details of the program are designed with industry.

What happens on 30 September 2021?

The required amendments to the *Migration Regulations 1994* to enable the new visa are expected to be in place from 30 September. However, the final program design is being developed in consultation with industry.

The arrival of the first workers under this new scheme will occur in Phase 1 from late 2021, subject to quarantine arrangements being agreed with states/territories and agreement with partner countries.

How do I participate in the agriculture visa program?

A phased approach to establishing the agriculture visa has been agreed with industry.

Phase 1 comprises a first small cohort of agriculture worker arrivals between December 2021 and March 2022, contingent on border settings, country readiness and quarantine availability. Recruitment under Phase 1 will be open only to a small number of existing Approved Employers who are already accredited and experienced with the existing PALM Scheme.

Phase 2, from April 2022, will see a steady increase in the number of employers participating in the agriculture visa, an increase in the number of workers recruited, and an expansion in the number of countries participating.



Details on how you can recruit workers from Phase 2 (April 2022) onwards will be confirmed and published at www.dfat.gov.au/agriculturevisa.

How do I recruit workers for the upcoming peak harvest period?

The existing Pacific Australian Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM Scheme), which brings together the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), will remain the mainstay for meeting workforce shortages in our primary industries sector—particularly for the upcoming peak harvest season:

- More than 15,600 Pacific and Timorese workers are in Australia at the moment, the largest number we have had in Australia at any one time, including more than 12,000 Pacific workers who have arrived in Australia since September 2020.
- The Government has committed to doubling the number of Pacific workers in Australia by March 2022 under the PALM Scheme bringing in an extra 12,500 workers from August 2021 to March 2022.
- There are an additional 55,000 pre-screened Pacific workers available to deploy, subject to available quarantine arrangements.

How many workers will be recruited under Phase 1?

The final number of how many workers will be recruited is being considered now, and will be subject to:

- agreement with the selected Approved Employers
- agreement with the countries with which we are negotiating
- agreement to the quarantine arrangements which will allow for the safe entry of these workers to Australia, and for the protection of the communities in which they will work.

Details about the participating countries and the numbers of workers will be published in future updates of this Factsheet and at www.dfat.gov.au/agriculturevisa once confirmed.

What sectors and skills are covered by the scheme?

The new agriculture visa will support recruitment of workers for the broad range of Australian agricultural industries, as well as the meat processing, fishery and forestry sectors. Particular occupations may be specified as more details of the program are confirmed in consultation with industry.

The agriculture visa program will target skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers across these sectors.



How will the visa program be structured?

The agriculture visa program will be demand driven. Key features of the Australian agriculture visa program mean that it will be:

- underpinned by data on workforce demand and supply, and labour market testing
- supported by strong program governance and oversight with minimum standards and safeguards built into the compliance and assurance framework and accommodation guidelines
- available to skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers across the broad range of agricultural industries, as well as the meat processing, fishery and forestry sectors. Details on relevant sectors will be confirmed and iteratively brought on board
- an employer-sponsored visa where employers hold obligations in relation to their foreign workers' employment
- able to respond to seasonal and longer-term workforce demands including through arrangements for workers to move between employers, while upholding workers' rights and protections
- able to support worker welfare and safety, including through minimum English language requirements
- ensuring standards are in line with Australia's successful Pacific worker programs, including requirements to protect workers from exploitation.

Can workers apply for permanent residency?

The Government has committed to exploring permanent residency pathways for participants in the program, including regional settlement. However, this will involve further consultation and design work. Further announcements on permanent residence pathways will be made as the program becomes operational in late 2021 and early 2022.

Will workers be able to move between employers?

Yes. This will be a feature of the program. An ongoing focus remains worker welfare and safety, so the program will ensure minimum standards can be maintained while supporting industry requirements for the portability of workers.

How will the agriculture visa program ensure worker protections?

- All workers in Australia have the same rights and protections at work, regardless of citizenship or visa status. Employers must pay wages and entitlements as set by law and provide a safe workplace.
- These rights and protections will apply equally to workers coming to Australia under the Australian agriculture visa.



Australian Government

- Standards to protect workers from exploitation will be modelled on existing standards under Australia's Pacific worker programs.
- The Australian Border Force and the Fair Work Ombudsman play an important role in ensuring compliance with visa requirements and workplace laws respectively.
- Further, the Government remains committed to establishing a national approach to labour hire regulation and is working with state and territory governments to identify opportunities for harmonising state and territory labour hire schemes.

How will the new agriculture visa program be implemented?

- The Australian agricultural visa program will be managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, leveraging its experience managing the successful PALM Scheme.
- The Department of Home Affairs will process all visa and sponsorship applications, as well as provide operational support with the Australian Border Force to ensure ongoing visa integrity.
- The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment will help ensure that the needs of the primary industry sectors are being met.

How will agriculture visa workers access quarantine?

- Under current Australian border settings, all incoming workers will be required to undertake quarantine, which will be arranged in close consultation with industry, as well as state and territory governments and their Chief Health Officers.
- Quarantine pathways will be established in line with the *National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response*.
- The number of people arriving under the Australian agriculture visa is expected to be limited in 2021 due to quarantine constraints but will progressively increase in 2022.