

The Role of Housing in the Integration and Wellbeing of Foreign Labour in the Canadian Agri-Food Sector: Experiences of Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada

BRIEF SUMMARY

This research examined the role of housing of Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWs) in Canada. The research conducted interviews with Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers to gain their reflections on housing while in Canada. Key findings are highlighted below.

- ❑ The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) is a major component of Canada's agricultural labour pool
- ❑ Housing location appears to play a role in determining their level of integration. The location of the farm greatly impacts the ability of SAWs to access to services and participate in community activities.
- ❑ The findings reveal a wide variety of SAWs' experiences that are more closely related to the disposition of their employer than any other factor, particularly those living in remote locations. The willingness of employers to help SAWs was a key determining factor of SAWs experience.
- ❑ Housing had a profound impact on their experience but was not a high priority for most participants. Earning potential was a high priority for SAWs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS

- ❑ Ensure the requirements for adequate housing for SAWs at the time of the labour market impact assessment should be strengthened
- ❑ Conduct annual inspections of SAWP worker housing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This summary was created from Louis Help's Master of Science in Rural Planning and Development thesis. The thesis can be accessed through the Atrium at the [University of Guelph](https://www.uoguelph.ca/).

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- ❑ Expand space available to workers or housing fewer workers per unit may actually increase their productivity in addition to their health.
- ❑ Be conscious of the options available to workers for off-farm activity.
- ❑ Ensure that Spanish-language translation is available for Mexican SAWs to allow them to communicate their needs to their employer and to service providers in the community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- ❑ Ensure that public service providers can be reached by WhatsApp, as this is the primary means of communication for SAWs.
- ❑ Ensure that public service providers have access to an employee or volunteer who understands at least basic Spanish in order to coordinate visits by Mexican SAWs.
- ❑ Establish networks with local volunteer groups to organize transportation for SAWs to service centres.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES

- ❑ Encouraged rural residents to connect with SAWs when possible to build social networks.
- ❑ Explore opportunities for an recreation and socialization in an off-farm context.

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