

NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVE

International Agricultural Workers, Housing and Rural Planning

How can housing arrangements be improved to reflect the health and welfare needs of international agri-food workers (IAWs)?

Overview

IAWs in the agri-food sectors face workplace vulnerabilities, including subpar housing conditions, highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This research initiative will explore innovative approaches to support IAW housing that can be transferred to rural Ontario and to examine how local, provincial, and federal policies and guidelines influence IAW housing options in the agri-food sector. The research will use a number of methods to connect with rural planners, local government officials, and agri-food sector actors in rural Ontario.

The methods will include systemic literature reviews on how other Canadian and international jurisdictions support IAWs; online surveys among land use planners and farmers to investigate policy impacts on IAW housing planning; and interviews among the agri-food sector in Ontario and IAWs in Mexico. This initiative will identify innovative practices, assess policy impacts, and gather insights from stakeholders to develop recommendations for enhancing IAW housing for the greater benefit of the agri-food sector and rural economies.



Research Goals

The primary goal of this research initiative is to provide the agri-food sector and government departments with knowledge on how to enhance the health and welfare needs of IAWs. The project will consist of five objectives:

- to examine how other jurisdictions support housing for IAW and the transferability to Ontario;
- to collect data from land use planners and farmers to investigate the impact of the Provincial Policy Statement on IAW housing planning;
- to collect data from IAWs and farmers to identify supportive approaches to housing and understand the impacts of COVID-19;
- to build recommendations to enhance the welfare of IAWs, support farmers, advance policy, support the broader agriculture and agri-food sector, and;
- to support and enhance highly qualified personnel through research skill set development and capacity building, mentorship, and networking

This research initiative will run from May 2023 until April 2026.

Research Team

This research is a collaborative initiative involving: Ray Silvius (University of Winnipeg), Sara Epp (University of Guelph), Andrea Smallwood (OMAFRA), Wayne Caldwell (University of Guelph), and Lidia Carvajal (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Mexico).

Acknowledgement

This research initiative is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.

Further Information

Contact Prof. Ryan Gibson (gibsonr@uoguelph.ca) for more information on this research initiative.

