

Skilled Workforce Solutions for Horticulture Workshop

Agriculture Victoria, DEDJTR
Agenda, 26 April 2017, 255 Ferguson Road, Tatura, Victoria 3616

PURPOSE

- Bring key industry stakeholders together to discuss skilled workforce development, planning issues and needs in the Goulburn Valley for the horticulture industry
- Enable industry to explore potential actions through the sharing of experiences from others
- Determine the industry vision to ensure there is a skilled workforce that meets the industry's current and future needs in the region.

INVITEES

Agriculture Victoria, DEDJTR

University of Melbourne

Regional Development Victoria, DEDJTR

Department of Education and Training

Horticulture Innovation Australia

Fruit Growers Victoria

Apple and Pear Australia Limited

Summerfruit Australia Limited

Victorian Farmers Federation

La Trobe University

Goulburn Valley Regional Partnership

SPC Ardmona

Goulburn Ovens TAFE

Committee for Greater Shepparton

Growcom

Queensland DAF

Greater Shepparton City Council

Moira Shire

Campaspe Shire

4 Upskilling

Fruit growing, packing and service businesses (numerous)

RMCG

AGENDA

TIME	ITEM	WHO
12:00pm	Arrival and working lunch	All
12:30pm	Welcome and forum opening	Gary Godwill (FGV)
12:35pm	Introduction and purpose of today (refer to discussion paper in Attachment 1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and progress made by Agriculture Victoria and RDV 	Anne-Maree Boland (RMCG) Carl Larsen (RMCG)
12:40pm	Overview and presentation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Understanding Skilled Workforce Issues in the Goulburn Valley Fruit Industry</i> scoping study 	Michael Santhanam-Martin (UoM) Lisa Cowan (DEDJTR)
1:10pm	Break out group question and answer session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation of the study and priorities for industry Are these still priorities? What's changed? 	All
1:45pm	Break	All
2:00pm	Panel discussion and insights into skilled workforce development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN) overview and lessons learnt – <i>Michelle Templin (Growcom)</i> National horticultural workforce and engagement programs (Gradlink, Agribusiness Masterclass in Horticultural business, Horticulture Women in Leadership, Churchill Fellowship co-investment, PhD Program) – <i>Sharyn Casey (Hort Innovation)</i> The dairy industry skilled workforce experience and lessons from workforce development officers – Ruth Nettle (UoM) The Goulburn Valley fruit growing business internship program perspective – <i>Brent Reeve/Peter Thompson (Jeftomson)</i> 	All
2:45pm	Break out group question and answer session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision – where does the industry want to be? Actions – what does the industry need to do to achieve this vision? 	All
3:20pm	Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for establishment of a Committee: purpose, function and membership 	Anne-Maree Boland (RMCG) Carl Larsen (RMCG)
3:30pm	Close	Anne-Maree Boland (RMCG) Carl Larsen (RMCG)

Attachment 1: Discussion paper

Overview and purpose

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Attracting, retaining and developing skilled people for middle management positions within fruit growing businesses is currently challenging. There is an opportunity to develop a consistent vision and strategy for skilled workforce development at an industry level in order to address the challenges being experienced on many individual farms. This has been identified in the *Goulburn Valley Fruit Growing Industry Roadmap* (2015) as well as the *Food Futures Goulburn Valley Cluster* (2016).

Since this skilled workforce issue was highlighted as a concern in the Goulburn Valley, progress to explore and address the issue has been made by a number of different agencies including Agriculture Victoria (DEDJTR), Regional Development Victoria (DEDJTR), the University of Melbourne and Fruit Growers Victoria (FGV). It is therefore timely to hold a workshop that involves the key industry stakeholders and determine the next steps.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- Bring key industry stakeholders together to discuss skilled workforce development, planning issues and needs in the Goulburn Valley for the horticulture industry
- Enable industry to explore potential actions through the sharing of experiences from others
- Determine the industry vision to ensure there is a skilled workforce that meets the industry's current and future needs in the region.

PANEL PURPOSE AND MEMBERS

A panel discussion has been included as an important part of the workshop agenda. The purpose of the panel is to provide insight and lessons from skilled workforce development in other states, industries and businesses.

The panel is comprised of four members and a brief biography is provided below.

Michelle Templin – Project Manager Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network, Growcom

Michelle is responsible for overseeing key activities related to training and workforce development at Growcom, the peak representative body for Queensland horticulture. She also works with Growcom's Advocacy and Policy Unit to enhance policy development and advocacy at the State and National levels.

Michelle will provide an overview of the Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN) and the lessons learnt to date. QAWN is part of a suite of Queensland Government funded initiatives, including the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA), Agforce School to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP) and Gateway Schools to Agribusiness, all of which aim to address agriculture's labour and skill needs.

Sharyn Casey – Relationship Manager – Strategic Co-Investment, Horticulture Innovation Australia

Sharyn establishes relationships with new business partners to source co-funding for research into urban greening and leadership programs, along with the management of existing relationships with funders and researchers. The role requires strategic oversight of these key investment funds (urban greening and leadership) to deliver outcomes for the Australian horticultural sector through Hort Innovation.

She will provide an overview of the national horticultural workforce and engagement programs including Horticultural Graduate Engagement Program, Masterclass in Horticultural business, Horticulture Women in Leadership, Churchill Fellowship co-investment and the PhD Program.

Ruth Nettle – Academic, Agriculture and Food, University of Melbourne

Dr Ruth Nettle leads the Rural Innovation Research Group (RIRG) at the University of Melbourne. Ruth's personal research interests include rural workforce development, including human transitions in farming and the role of collaborative action in supported change, as well as the role of extension in rural change (learning systems, adaptation).

Ruth will provide insight into the dairy industry skilled workforce experience and lessons from workforce development officers.

Brent Reeve/Peter Thompson, Jeftomson fruit packers

Geoffrey Thompson Fruit Packing Company Pty Ltd, known as Jeftomson, was founded in 1949. The company is a vertically integrated horticultural business, having full control of the product from growing, storing, packing and transport, through to sales and marketing.

It has the largest apple and pear packing business in Australia. In excess of 35,000 tonnes of fruit was processed by Jeftomson in 2013, which is forecast to increase to more than 40,000 tonnes by 2019. They are the largest Australian pear supplier to New Zealand.

Brent/Peter will provide a unique perspective of a Goulburn Valley fruit growing business and how they have addressed skilled workforce development through an innovative internship program.

QUESTION

- What lessons from other regions or sectors could be applied to the Goulburn Valley fruit industry?

What's been done to date?

PROGRESS BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT

Previous engagement with key industry stakeholders through the Goulburn Valley Food Futures Cluster that concluded in February 2016, identified labour and skills shortages as 'the major concern' for businesses as fruit growers plan for the future. Fruit Growers Victoria and its Board sees workforce development as a high priority for the industry.

An application for the Goulburn Valley to undertake regional workforce development planning and action, including a graduate and internship program, was submitted to Horticulture Innovation Australia under the Leadership, Professional Development Fund in March 2016. The application was based upon the findings of the Food Futures Cluster project, however was unsuccessful.

A further application was submitted to the Department of Education and Training under the Training Participation and Facilitation Fund in May 2016 but was too unsuccessful.

A strategic partnership workforce project led by University of Melbourne and in partnership with Agriculture Victoria, and its regional partners, GOTAFE and Fruit Growers Victoria submitted an application to the Regional Skills Fund administered by Regional Development Victoria in January 2017 and is still under consideration. The application is seeking funding to build the capacity of the fruit industry in the Goulburn Valley to undertake regional workforce development planning and actions, and enable industry to better attract, retain and develop the people it needs into the future.

The proposed project focuses on the skilled segment of the workforce and provides a phased approach to regional workforce development:

- Phase 1: Develop a framework for workforce planning (drawing on expertise from University Melbourne and learnings from the dairy sector) and action plan
- Phase 2: Implementation of action plan.

SCOPING STUDY

The University of Melbourne in partnership with Agriculture Victoria has conducted a scoping study between September 2016 and April 2017 to better understand the workforce issues and needs of the Goulburn Valley fruit growing industry. The results of this study, *Understanding Skilled Workforce Issues in the Goulburn Valley Fruit Industry*, are ready for presentation to industry.

The aim of the study was to develop a better understanding of the issues affecting the ability of perennial fruit industry businesses in the Goulburn Valley to attract, retain and develop appropriately skilled workers.

The study was informed by a 'systemic' approach to workforce development. This approach assumes that the availability of suitably-skilled workers arises from the dynamic interactions of elements in the workforce system including the policy environment, the training system, broader labour market conditions, and the business context and human resource management practices of employers.

Based on interviews with twenty-five fruit industry employers and two additional industry stakeholders, as well as a desktop study of relevant existing documents and data, four typical workforce structures were found in the participating fruit growing businesses:

1. Small orchards (<50 ha) with no permanent staff beyond the family
2. Small to medium orchards (50-70 ha) usually with one permanent employee
3. Medium orchards (100-200 ha) with a small permanent staff
4. Large orchards (>200 ha) and integrated businesses with multi-tiered management structures.

It also identified the most common job titles found in these businesses, and the typical duties, and range of pay scales and conditions attached to these jobs.

The main conclusions and implications for understanding recruitment, career paths and workforce development include:

- Many employers have a preference for the internal recruitment pathway, including the internal recruitment pathway that leads from non-managerial jobs to managerial jobs
- Despite the common preference for internal recruitment, employers also recruit externally
- Effectively maintaining a workforce that meets business needs relies on both internal and external recruitment
- Employers had diverse approaches and views about the use of position descriptions in their businesses
- Seasonal workers are critical to business success because of the labour intensity required during peak times.

The findings of this study identify the range of entry-points to jobs, and the career progression pathways, that currently exist for workers in the perennial fruit industry.

A range of areas for potential industry collaboration to improve workforce development were also identified. These include:

- Targeted linkage development with the training sector to ensure that training scope and delivery meet industry needs
- Develop a collective understanding of common jobs, pay scales and associated position descriptions as a way to develop mutual understanding of expectations by employers within the region and industry
- Establish a regional industry approach to enhance the availability of career paths for managerial roles
- Undertake industry-directed environmental scanning and research.

QUESTIONS

- Will the above initiatives meet industry workforce development needs?
- What could be done to improve the recent Regional Skills Fund proposal developed?

Workshop outcomes and next steps

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The key outcomes from the workshop and next steps include:

- Develop agreed industry position and actions for skilled workforce development
- Confirm roles and responsibilities between industry and government to address the issues and progress the preliminary actions identified
- Establish purpose, function and membership of a Committee
- Amend and re-submit the strategic partnership proposal to Regional Development Victoria for the Regional Skills Fund.

INDICATIVE STRUCTURE AND TIMELINES

The progression of skilled workforce development in the Goulburn Valley fruit industry needs to be owned by industry, with potential coordination thorough Fruit Growers Victoria. The approach needs to be collaborative, with support from Agriculture Victoria, GOTAFE, the University of Melbourne and other key industry stakeholders.

It is expected that following the workshop a Committee will be formed and meet twice over the course of the next 3 to 6 months.