

The tree fruit and wine grape sectors are facing significant challenges accessing and retaining skilled domestic labour. Comprehensive strategies are needed to better understand the landscape, increase the number of domestic workers, and ensure an attractive job market.

90% of BC's tree fruit and wine grape production is in the Okanagan. Some of these sectors can be heavily dependent upon temporary foreign workers to meet labour demands, which creates vulnerability. Domestic workers in the sector have been declining and there is a need for comprehensive strategies to better understand the domestic labour landscape, increase the number of domestic workers, and ensure an attractive job market so these workers can be retained.

A research project is underway to better understand the labour needs of growers, the current job market, and the availability, experiences, and perceptions of domestic farm workers. The research will include interviews with growers and workers, a literature review on agricultural labour, and secondary data from Statistics Canada and other sources. The results will inform engagement strategies that can help increase future domestic workers in the sectors and serve as a pilot that can be replicated and expanded to other sectors and regions.

The project is a collaboration between the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP), and BC Fruit Works. The CCLSP is a partnership between the BC Grapegrowers', Fruit Growers', and Cherry associations, the BC Wine Grape Council, and the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program.

Do you know a grower or domestic worker in the Okanagan tree fruit or wine grape industry who might like to participate? If so, please reach out to [bcfruitworks.harvest@gmail.com](mailto:bcfuitworks.harvest@gmail.com).

The project adheres to principles of ethical research and is overseen by the KPU Research Ethics Board, Application KPU REB 2024-19.

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