

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Resources



Wednesday, 1 April 2020

GIVING JOBSEEKERS A FRESH START IN AGRICULTURE

The Victorian Government is giving workers who have lost their jobs a fresh start in agriculture and ensuring primary producers have the workers they need to keep producing at high levels during the coronavirus pandemic.

Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development Jaclyn Symes launched the \$50 million *Agriculture Workforce Plan* today, which will provide practical support for critical food industries, helping the sector and regional communities.

The plan will match workers who have lost their jobs with employers in the agriculture sector, helping agribusinesses and primary producers to meet their labour and operational needs during this difficult period.

It's part of the Government's \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund, established to help workers who have lost their jobs find new opportunities.

Agriculture Victoria and Regional Development Victoria are working together to match displaced workers to vital industries such as horticulture, dairy, meat and food production and manufacturing, as well as transport and logistics services.

The initiative will also help pay for training to ensure redeployed workers have swift access to any necessary upskilling.

It will aim to match workers to roles within their regions and towns, while looking across Victoria to fill unmet demand in food supply chains.

Workers will be given support to relocate if needed, which will provide flow-on benefits for the accommodation sector, which in some areas has been hit by the double impact of the coronavirus pandemic and bushfires. This will be done with the highest health and hygiene protections, and social distancing controls.

Employers and workers in the agriculture and food production sectors will also benefit from payroll tax refunds and deferrals contained in the Government's \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package.

Other measures have been put in place to ensure business continuity, including lifting truck curfews to speed up restocking efforts and supporting important food processing facilities to continue safe production.

Individuals, farmers and businesses who wish to register for the *Agriculture Workforce Plan* can do so at vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"Through no fault of their own, many people have found themselves out of a job and facing an uncertain future – this is about providing the chance of a new beginning for those workers."

"We can make sure that our amazing farmers have the workforce they need to keep producing for Victoria and for rookie agriculture workers, a new world opens up. It's a win all round."

Media contact: Casey Lodge 0410 964 928 | casey.lodge@minstaff.vic.gov.au