

# REAP

## Regional Employer Alliance Project (REAP) Central Highlands, Queensland

A Project to Develop Alliances with Employers within the Agriculture, Infrastructure, Local Government and Resource Industry Sectors

Seasonal Workforce Attraction: Matching local skill needs to the skill sets of a travelling population

## AGRICULTURAL SKILLS AND LABOUR REPORT CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, QUEENSLAND

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## **DISCLAIMER**

This document has been prepared by the author for Central Highlands Development Corporation, in good faith on the basis of available information. While the information is considered true and correct at the date of publication, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the information. The information may change without notice and the author is not in any way liable for the accuracy of any information contained in this document.

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## Executive Summary

If anyone doubted that the agricultural industries of the Central Highlands are experiencing a critical shortfall in labour and skills, the information collected during AgGrow from 10 to 12 July 2008 is explicit.

107 businesses were sampled, representing operations on 1,004,343 Ha or 19.5%, nearly 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the total land under agricultural production in the Central Highlands.

64% of sampled agricultural businesses in the Central Highlands operate with current vacancies. At 12 July 2008, reported vacancies totaled 79 fulltime positions (22% of the total fulltime workforce sampled) and 23 part-time casual positions. More than a quarter of all businesses had between half and all of their positions empty. The mean average length of vacancies reported was 9.9 months; 42% of businesses sampled reported unfilled vacancies of 1 and ½ years or greater.

It is useful to compare these figures to indicators used by other sector employers; the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) Human Resources Staff Reference Group considers greater than 10% is considered to cause unsustainable operational stress on employees. (Pers. Comm., J. Nuss Central Highlands Regional Council 15/5/08)

Significant impacts were reported by respondents on productivity, ability to use technology, damage to equipment and the social wellbeing of the family unit. The latter included the inability to go to the doctor, and being forced to take children from school to help when the workload is heaviest.

While vacancies were reported across all occupations with the exception of property managers, farmhand positions were the hardest to fill; 66% of full time and 26% of part time positions are vacant. Specific skills across agricultural enterprises that were commonly listed as being difficult to source included mechanical, computer, farm-engineering, carpentry/building maintenance, and those with truck or other specific licences.

Reported heaviest workloads by a number of industries match the window of tourist visitors to the Central Highlands. These include duties such as weaning, branding and mustering by cattle producers, tasks associated with planting winter crops and harvesting summer crops for grain producers, and some horticultural tasks. However, all businesses reported needing help in down periods for maintenance and repairs.

Analysis of the data has shown an industry sector that is keen to try new ways of employment to attract skilled people into their businesses:

- 87% would consider short-term contracts
- 68% would consider employing people on job-share arrangements
- 86% are able to offer accommodation to employees

A significant number, 85% have asked to be included and informed about a potential seasonal workforce program with older, skilled workers.

## Background to the Report

The Local Government Managers Association (National) commissioned Interim Agricultural Skills And Labour Report, Central Highlands, Queensland, (the Report) in February 2008 to provide information to REAP (Central Highlands) regarding the agricultural sector labour needs.

This needs analysis is a companion to analyses of labour in the mining, civil contracting and local government sectors of the Central Highlands, a literature review, and analyses of tourists travelling through Emerald currently being undertaken. The Key Evaluation Question for all research undertaken as part of this project is:

**Can local skills shortages in agriculture, civil construction, local government & mining be met & matched to the skill sets of the travelling population?**

All full report will be presented when data collection and analysis is completed across the four industry sectors in November 2008.

Objectives of the Agricultural Skills (Central Highlands) Report are to:

- Provide a measure of vacant positions
- Identify tasks required and at what times of the year
- Identify skills required
- Measure compatibility of short-term contracts and job-share working arrangements with agricultural business needs
- Collect information regarding available accommodation/facilities
- Register interest of Central Highlands agricultural businesses in participating in a potential REAP skill matching program
- Initiate a database of contacts of interested businesses
- Identify barriers to skill matching

This information provides the context, direction and justification that the REAP Steering Committee and Regional Project Manager can use to develop strategies to attract a Seasonal Workforce to match local skill needs.

## REAP (Central Highlands) Steering Committee

A Steering Committee provided overview and guided the progress of the REAP project from its instigation in November 2007. The Steering Committee contributes from their experiences, representative across agricultural, mining, civil contracting and local government sectors of the Central Highlands, and provides a conduit for report information through their networks.

The Committee provided guidance and feedback on the design and conduct of survey activities at a meeting held 23 June 2008 and via email. 2PH Farms and AgForce both contributed staff time to assist in collection of surveys during the AgGrow Field Day.

- Craig Pressler, Proprietor, 2PH Farms
- Ian Burnett, AgForce Queensland
- Dr Jim Sands, Australian Agricultural College (Emerald Campus)
- Mike McCosker, Central Highlands Cotton Growers & Irrigators Association
- Bryan Ottone, Councillors and staff, Central Highlands Regional Council

- Peter Dowling, Central Highlands Regional Development Corporation
- Chris Vine, C&J Excavator Hire
- Michael Gavin, BMA Gregory Crinum Mine
- Graham Morris, Ensham Mine
- Nicola Williams, Rio Tinto Coal Australia Kestrel Mine
- Shayne Shepherd, Shepherd Diesel

## Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference are modified from the REAP (Central Highlands) Project Contract and informed the specific engagement of the Central Highlands agricultural sector by the Regional Project Manager;

1. Develop and conduct survey of employers, to gather data including the type of work in demand, skill level required, issues to consider such as accreditation, and potential employment arrangements;
2. Analyse the employer and potential employee surveys to determine skill match and training and incentives requirements;
3. Broker comprehensive buy-in to the pilot project from regional employers across the REAP sectors;
4. Garner commitments to the Project and participation in the REAP Regional Employers Alliance from representatives within and across the REAP sectors and across the designated REAP region.

## Methodology

Anecdotally, landholders are over-surveyed and uninclined to fill out anonymous surveys by post, however for the purposes of this survey, as wide a sampling as possible of the Central Highlands businesses was required.

To minimise inaccuracies, and to maximise the number of respondents participating, a personal, face-to-face approach during the Emerald AgGrow Field Day, 10 -12 July 2008 was planned. Comprehensive access to a variety of agricultural businesses was considered possible at AgGrow, Central Queensland's largest agricultural field day which attracts more than 20,000 visitors each year.

## Methods Used

This study was undertaken over three days of data collection, and three days of analysis and reporting. The following data collection methods were used to compile information for the Report:

- A literature review was undertaken from printed, electronic and other media sources for relevant reports and research.
- An in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with Craig Pressler, 2PH Farms, 7 April 2008 to develop an agricultural industry case study.

- A formal structured questionnaire and a collection plan was developed by Regional Project Manager, Liz Alexander and pre-tested by agricultural sector members of the REAP Steering Committee at a meeting held 23 June 2008 and via email.
- 90 agricultural businesses from the Central Highlands Regional Council area were surveyed during the AgGrow Field Day held in Emerald from 10 – 12 July 2008. The questionnaire was administered by Regional Project Manager, Liz Alexander, 2PH and AgForce staff.
- Interviewers filled out surveys for respondents with one exception. One staff member during the first two days had limited literacy skills and asked respondents to fill out forms themselves; this was not planned for and as a result a small number of questions were not filled out correctly.
- On 10 July, a ticket redeemable for drinks or lunch at AgGrow bars and canteens was offered as an incentive for agricultural businesses to participate in the survey. This had limited effect. For the 11 and 12 July, free cold drinks were offered in a wheelbarrow signed with information regarding the survey, which was wheeled through the Field Day. This proved an extremely successful incentive.
- The survey was supported by an article in the Central Queensland News Friday 4 July 2008, and A0 colour posters providing information on the project and case studies of participants were displayed at the BMA Gregory Crinum and AgForce/Rabo Bank stands at AgGrow.
- 17 agricultural businesses attending AgGrow requested a survey be faxed or emailed to them due to other commitments during the field day. These were transmitted by fax/email, followed up by telephone by the Regional Project Manager and the last received by 8 August 2008.
- A total of 107 agricultural businesses within the Central Highlands were surveyed. 8 businesses from outside the Central Highlands Regional Shire filled out surveys but their data has not been included.
- Data was processed, checked, entered and analysed by the Regional Project Manager.



**Mick Matthews, volunteer interviewer from 2PH Farms, with participants in the Agricultural Skills Shortages Survey, AgGrow Field Day, 11 July 2008.**

## Results

### Respondents

A total of 107 agricultural businesses participated from the Central Highlands covering 1,004,343 Ha. This represents 19.5% of the total agricultural area of the Central Highlands Shire, and 16.6% of the entire Central Highlands region of 6064320 Ha (Fitzroy Basin Association 2008).

### Location within Central Highlands

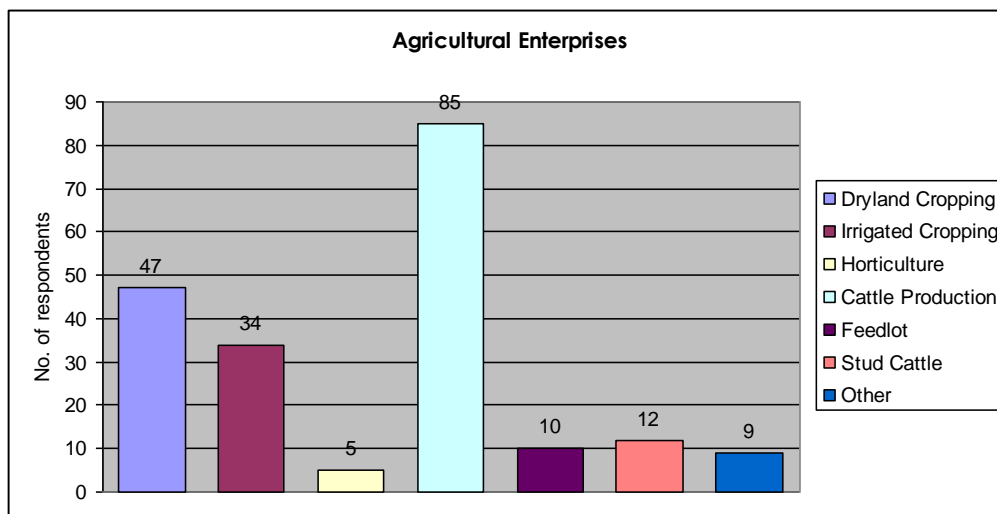
The majority of respondents operated properties located near Emerald (36), followed by Springsure (18), and Capella (12). While Clermont is listed, this only describes properties located 5km south of the township and still within the Central Highlands area.

**Table 1: Nearest Town to Respondents**

Nearest Town	No. of respondents
Alpha	4
Blackwater	1
Bluff	2
Capella	12
Comet	6
Clermont	10
Dingo	5
Duaringa	1
Emerald	36
Gindie	6
Springsure	18
Rolleston	5
No Response	5

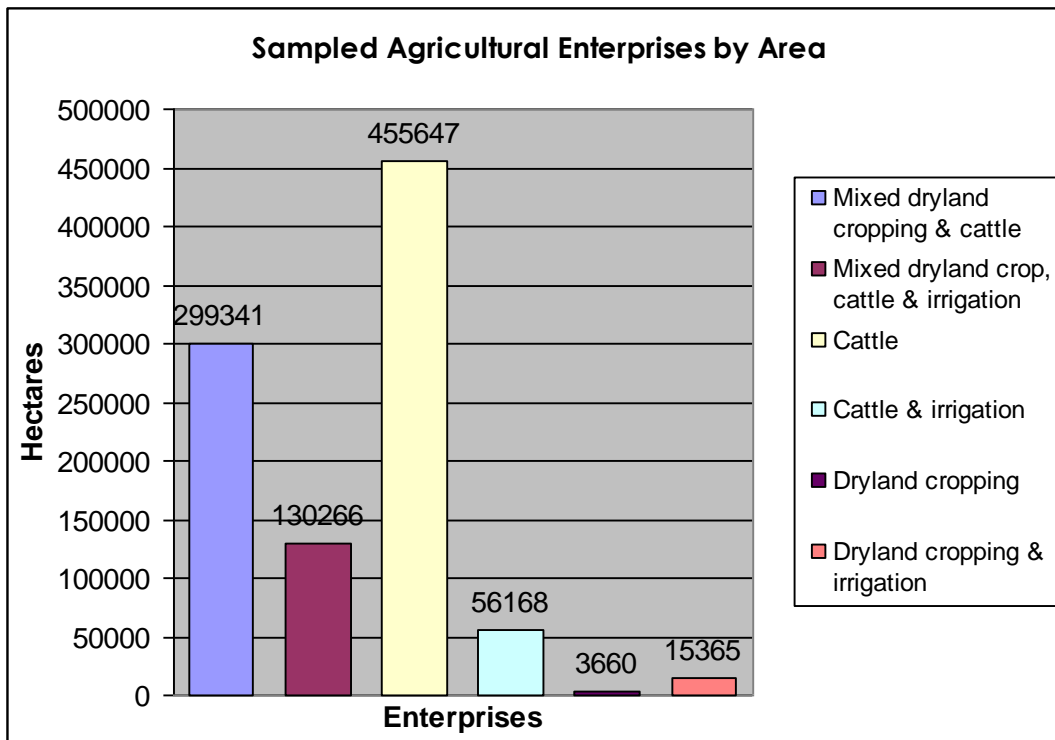
The number of respondents indicating their location totals 111, more than the number of businesses sampled, as a number of businesses operated properties in more than one location in the Central Highlands.

### Type of Agricultural Operations Run in Business



Other enterprises listed included:

- Training (Australian Agricultural College Corporation - Emerald Campus) (1)
- Earthmoving (2)
- Harvest Contracting (1)
- Hay Baling Contracting (1)
- Spray Contracting (1)
- Sheep Production (2)
- Aerial agriculture and charter flights (1)
- Meat Goats (1)
- Horse stud (1)



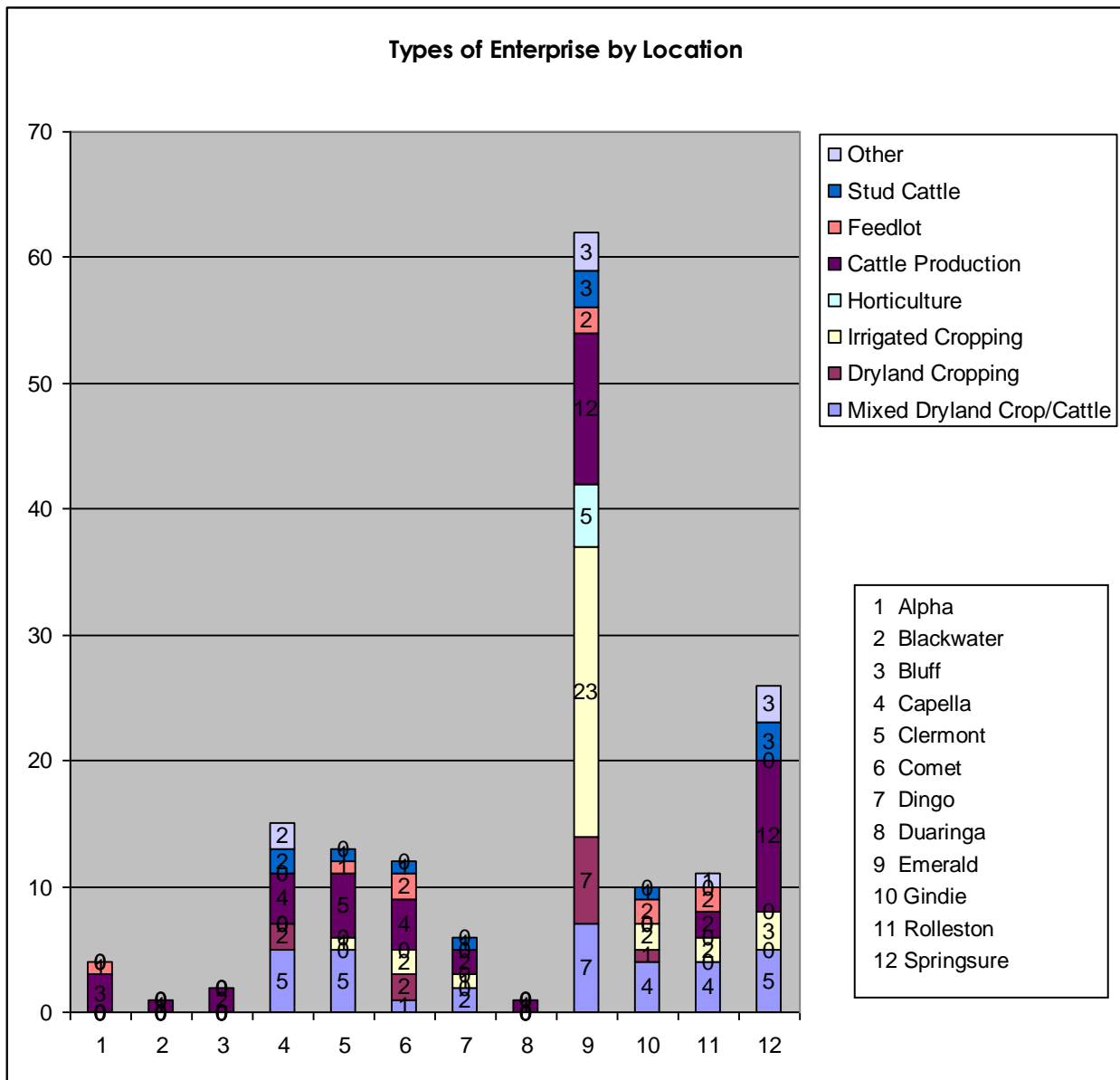
While some of the land use descriptions used in sampling do not match those supplied in Table 2: Agricultural Land Use, Central Highlands Regional Council Area, they do provide a useful reference.

From looking at the numbers of different enterprises in each location, it is evident that the survey has had an excellent response from businesses producing irrigated crops, horticulture, dryland cropping, and mixed dryland cropping and cattle production. The following chart shows numbers and types of enterprises of sampled participants by location. From this data, it is estimated less than 50% of cattle production businesses have been surveyed in the former Daringa and Bauhinia Shire regions.

**Table 2: Agricultural Land Use, Central Highlands Regional Council Area**

Land Use Description	Hectares
Cropping	472,639
Intensive Animal Production	327
Irrigated Cropping	22,115
Irrigated cotton	23,643
Irrigated perennial horticulture	1,981
Irrigated vine fruits	38
Livestock Grazing	4,634,871
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,155,614</b>

(FBA 2008)

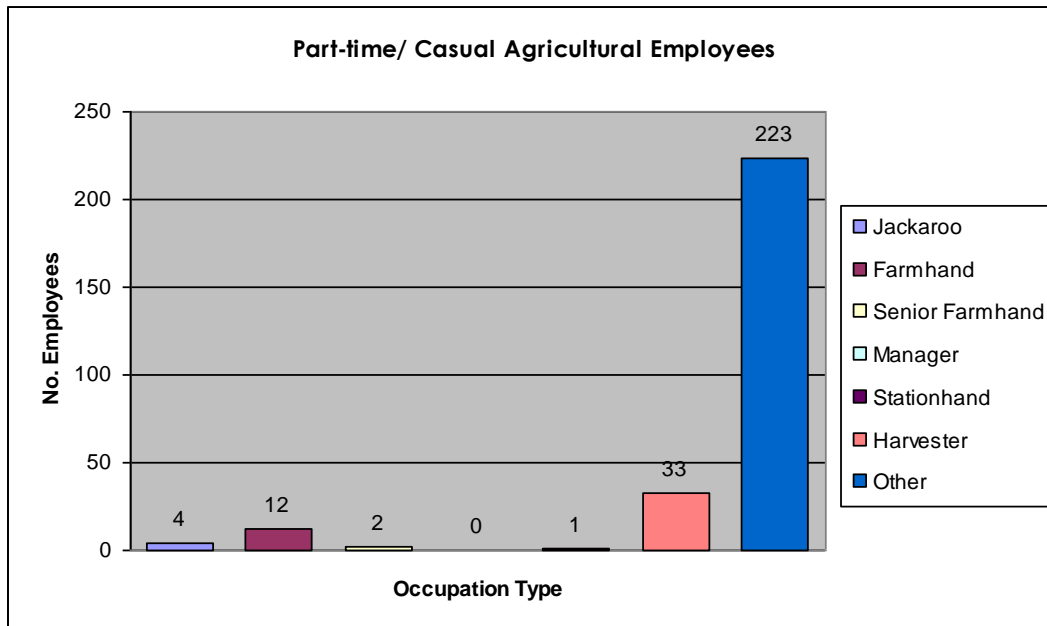
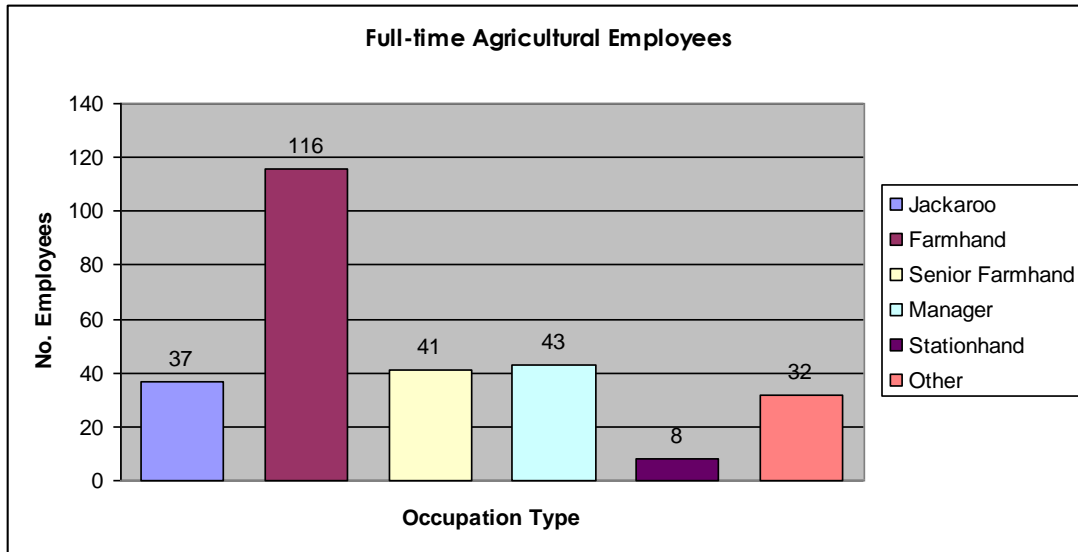


### Current Number of Employees

13 respondents reported that they were owner-operators and employed no staff.

The remaining 94 sampled businesses employed a total of 277 staff in full time positions at 12 July, and a total of 275 staff were employed on a casual / part time basis at this time; 180 picking and pruning on horticultural businesses.

The survey only collected data on employed persons within businesses and did not collect data on business owners working within the business.



### Businesses with a Full Workforce

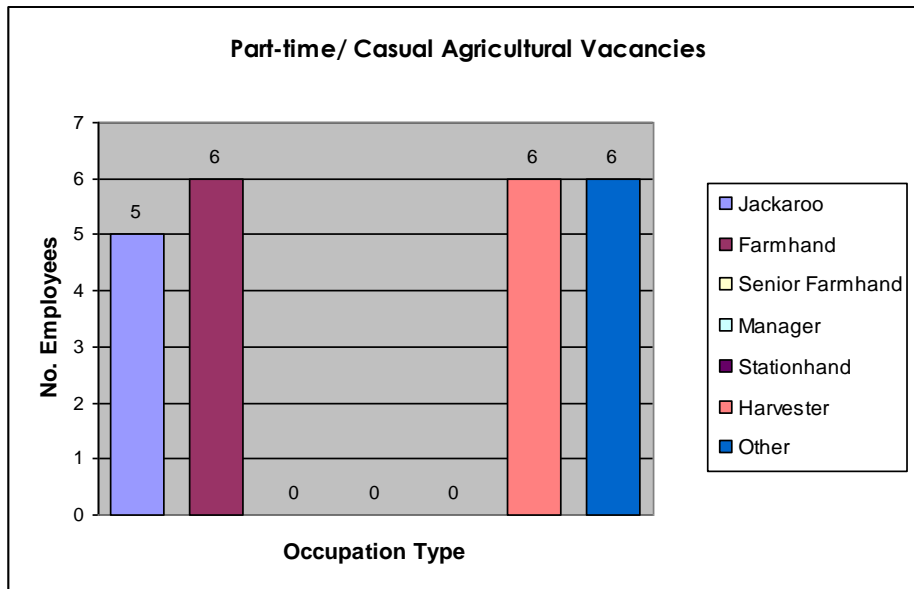
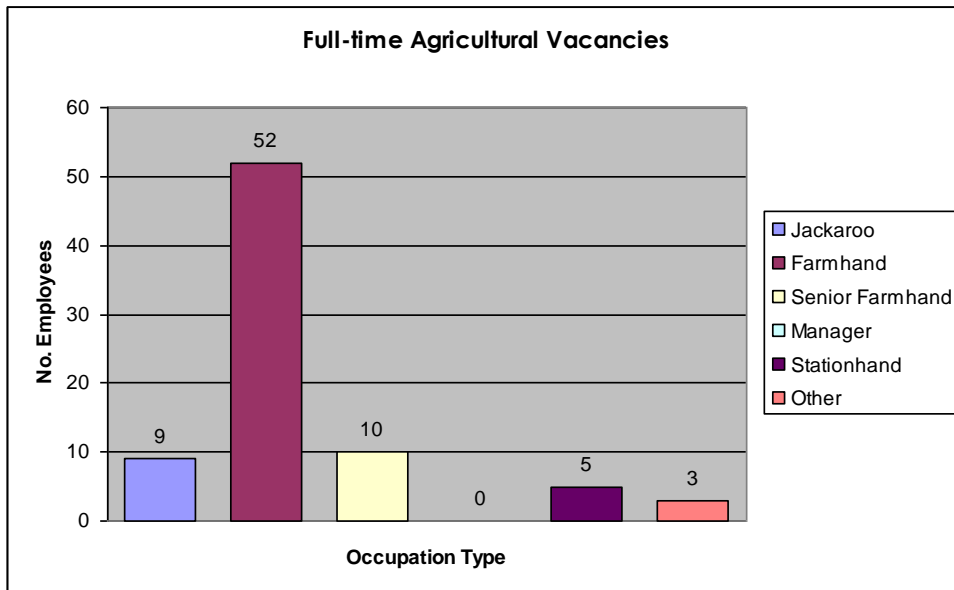
Of the 94 sampled businesses employing staff, 60 businesses (64%) reported current job vacancies. Only 34 businesses (36%) reported full employment in their businesses.

### Current Number of Vacancies

79 fulltime positions were reported unfilled, representing 22% of the total fulltime available workforce sampled. 23 part-time/casual positions were listed as vacant, representing 8% of the total available part-time/casual workforce sampled.

The majority of vacancies were reported for farmhand positions; 66% of fulltime positions and 26% of part-time/casual positions.

Of those reporting vacancies, 25 businesses, or 27% of those employing staff had between half to all of their positions empty. The full staff size averaged across these businesses was 2.8 employees, and all are family businesses.



## Length of Vacancies

The averaged length of vacancies reported by the 65 sampled businesses with unfilled positions is 9.9 months. The shortest length of vacancy reported was 1 month, the longest 10 years. 27 businesses (42%) of businesses reporting vacancies had had those positions empty for a period of 1 & 1/2 years or greater. A vacancy of 2 years was the most commonly reported length of unfilled position(s) (18% respondents).

## Ability to Employ People with Appropriate Skills

75% of all respondents reported they were unable to source labour with appropriate level of skills for their business. 15 of the 31 respondents (48%) who reported having no vacancies, also reported that they had employed staff whose skills were inferior to those required for the job.

A number of issues were evident from comments made regarding the ability to employ people with appropriate skills. All responses are contained in Appendix 2.

### Concern of the affect on production:

16 respondents voiced concerns about the effect on production; within this group there were three specific themes:

- **Reduced uptake of technology or abandonment of production technology:** 4 respondents specifically identified the difficulty in finding staff who were able to use computers and GPS technology.  
*"Backpackers are not the answer when expensive equipment & crops need ongoing or experienced staff (A backpacker rolled an 8-wheel articulated tractor into a quarry 3 years ago & haven't used GPS on our dryland operations since)"*
- **Cost to business from damaged equipment/animals:** 4 respondents sited damage to machinery as a direct result of employing unskilled labour. The Regional Project Manager spoke to one respondent who discussed animal welfare issues but requested that their details not be noted.  
*"Casual fruit pickers, problems with skills, damage gear, not worth employing."*
- **Cost to business from time spent in training and supervision of unskilled labour:**  
*"We employ people who know absolutely nothing and train them and hope they stay for 12 months & it takes that long to make up for the productivity lost while they are learning."*

Mechanical and farm engineering skills were quoted as the most difficult to source (5 respondents), however 2 participants also mentioned they were unable to source people who could ride bikes or horses.

**Higher wages are offered but still not competitive:** 4 participants cited above award wages as not assisting in competing with the mines for positions, and reducing the number of positions they would normally employ.

*"Unrealistic and uninterested, want to go to the mines on \$100K and only stay 2 weeks."*

*"We pay extremely good wages up to \$27 per hour plus holiday pay."*

**Businesses are already trying new strategies to source labour:** 11 respondents mentioned that they are attempting to source alternate staff due to having no other employment options.

- **Older employees:** 5 respondents noted that they were employing older employees, however opinion was mixed on their suitability.  
*"Very few (general employees) have skills - 50+ years are the only ones left to employ."*
- **Backpackers:** 5 respondents were sourcing backpackers, but only one did not comment about the inferior quality of work or difficulty in training.
- **Other Areas:** 2 respondents was sourcing labour from areas where industries are in crisis, for example irrigation areas suffering from water shortages, or the Irish construction industry.
- **457 Visas:** 1 respondent noted that they have used 457 visas to source South African farm workers successfully, but described it as a difficult process.  
*"(We) have employed people through the 457 Visa from South Africa, however it is a lot of work to get it all organised - need another full time employee but can't afford one at the current cost of labour above award wages."*
- **Trainees:** Only one respondent was recorded as employing trainees, however 5 respondents noted that they train unskilled labour on the job.

The Regional Project Manager noted a marked difference in the responses received from men and women when asked to comment on the ability to employ people with appropriate skills; female business members were more concerned with health, holidays, schooling and safety, and their responses were emotional and resentful. While not measured, the majority of surveys were answered by men. Two key themes were presented by female respondents:

**Inability to leave the property:** 4 respondents cited the inability to leave the property due to having no workforce as being a concern. Concerns varied with age of participants; older women were concerned that their husbands were able to see the doctor for health checks, younger women with small children were concerned about travelling alone to give birth to children, or being relied upon to run bores and machinery.

*"We run the place by ourselves, but need help to check waters so that we can occasionally go on holidays or for example it would mean that my husband can come with me for the birth of our second child in November (no hospital nearby)."*

*"Have two small children and we are running the property without any help - when my husband is away as his father is very ill, I am left to start engines, run waters etc by myself with a 12 week old child."*

**Children being removed from school to help with work:** 2 respondents noted that the labour shortage had forced them to take primary and secondary aged children from school to help. 3 other respondents noted that they had done the same but asked that their comments not be formally recorded.

*"We have 2 kids of school age & we have to pull them out of school to get work done, don't get holidays - been impossible since mine activity ramped up 3 - 5 years ago."*

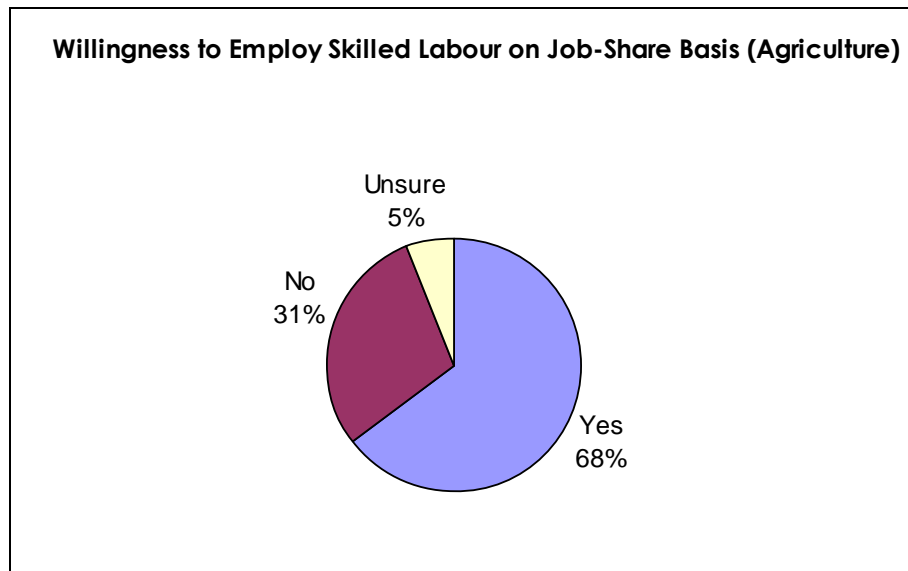
### Suitability of Skilled Labour on Short-term Contracts

87% of all respondents indicated their interest in employing staff on short term contracts.



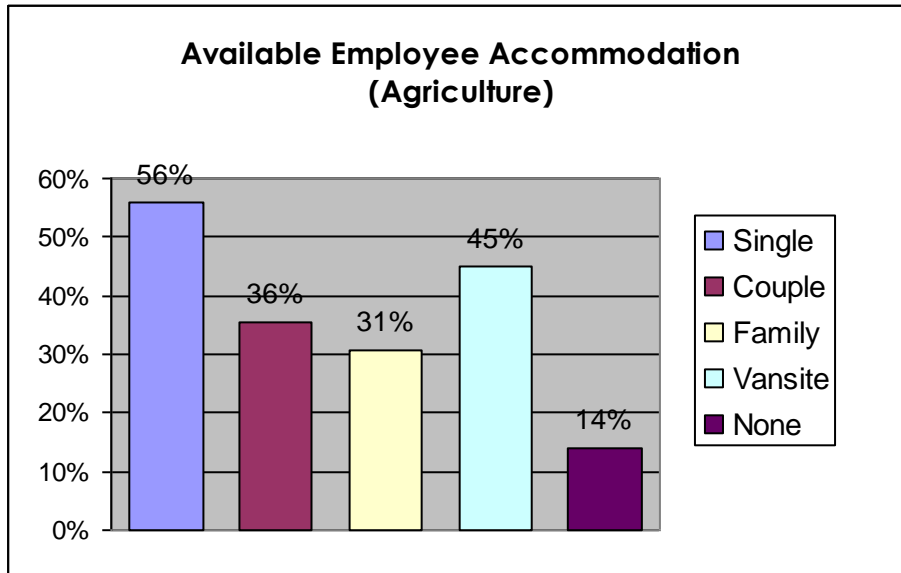
### Suitability of Skilled Labour on a Job-Share Basis

68% of all respondents indicated that they would consider employing persons on a job-share basis.



### Accommodation Available to Employees

Nearly all rural employers were able to offer accommodation to prospective employees.

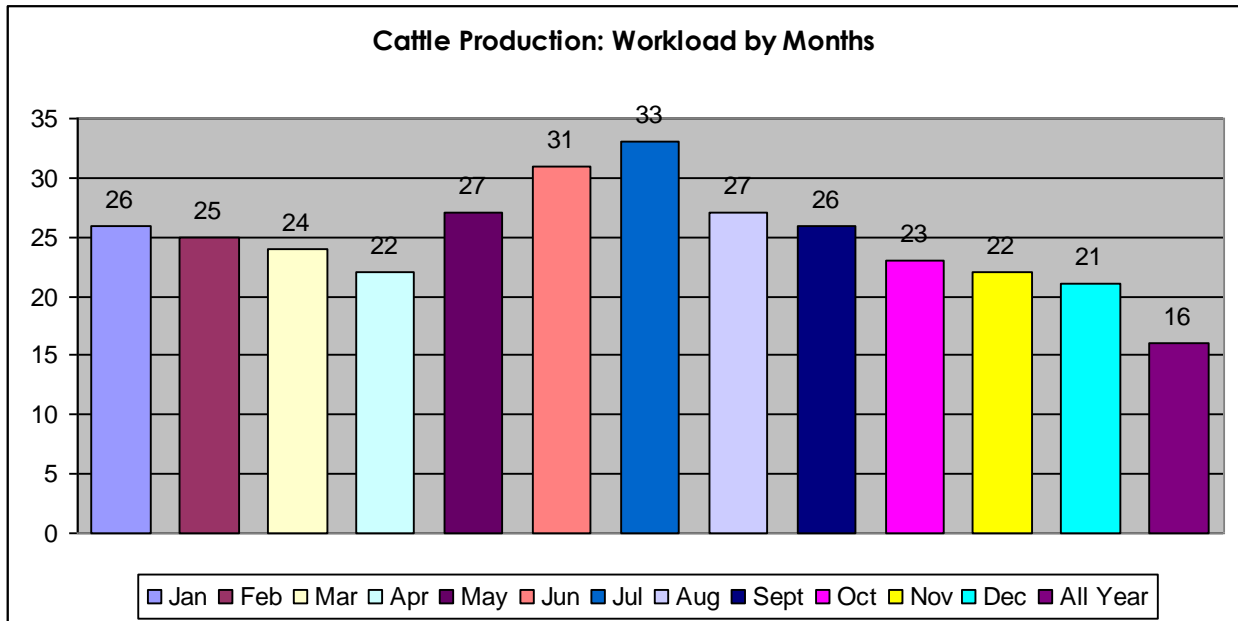


### Workload by Month and Enterprise

The following charts map business responses to which months they experienced their heaviest workload. Businesses were able to nominate as many months of the year as they felt suitable.

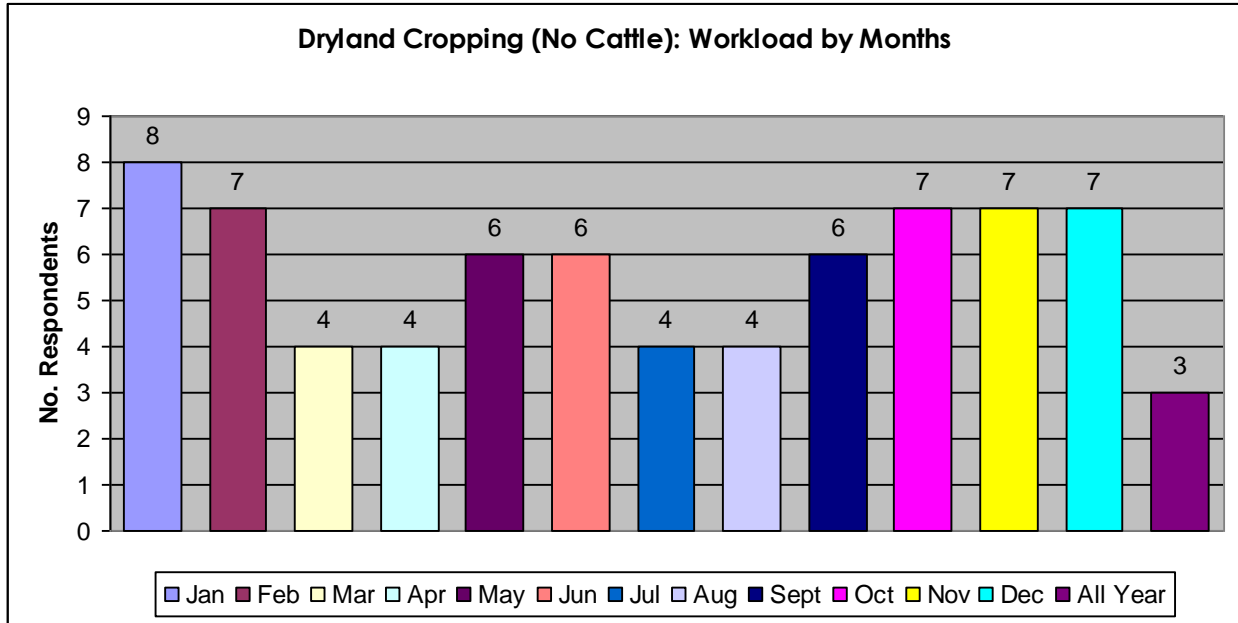
### Cattle Production

Stockwork, mustering, maintenance, fencing, branding and weaning, running bores were listed throughout the year. Some cattle producers had specific months for tasks such as branding in November and weaning in May, but these varied according to production set up. February was listed as a month to check creek crossings.



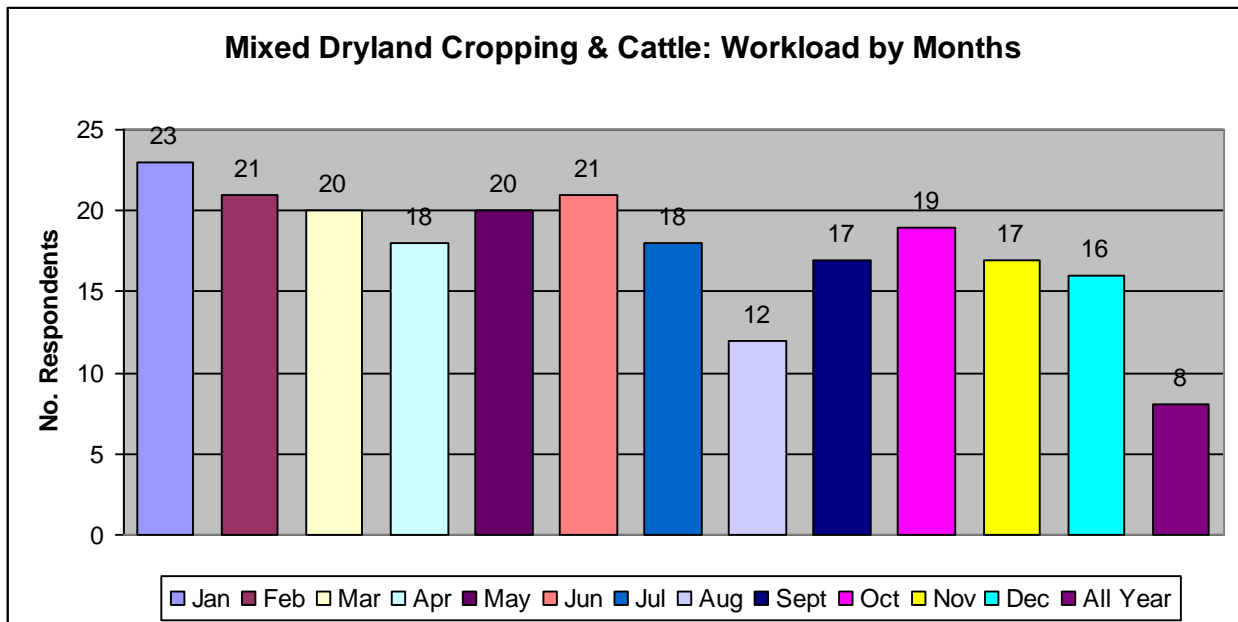
### Dryland Cropping

Months listed reflect the summer and winter cropping activities undertaken in the Central Highlands. Summer planting of sorghum, mungbeans, corn and sunflowers was listed from December to February and winter planting of wheat and chickpeas when soil moisture available in May, June. Harvesting and truck driving were tasks listed predominantly from May til July for summer crops and September to November for winter crops. Spraying, farm and machinery maintenance were listed year round.



### Mixed Cropping & Cattle

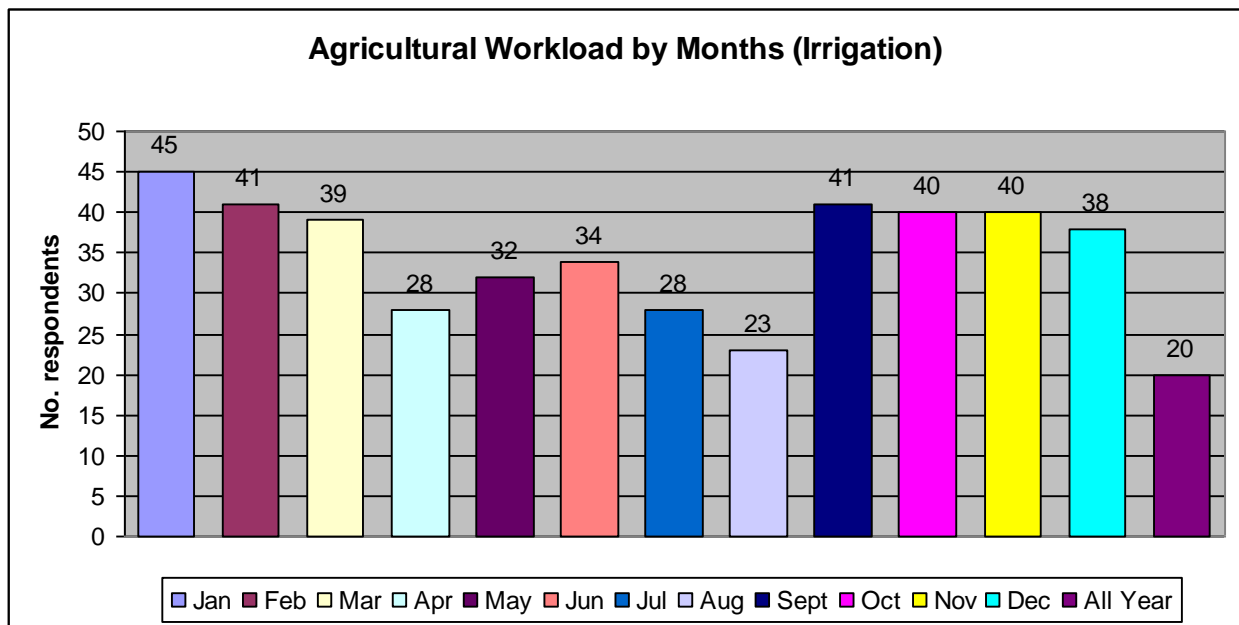
Tasks included both those listed for dryland cropping and cattle production previously.



### Irrigated Cropping & Horticulture

Months listed as having highest workload occur from September to March. Tasks such as irrigation preparation and cotton planting occur in September. General irrigation, spraying and tractor duties occur in the cotton industry until defoliating and picking in March/April. Horticulturalists listed duties such as pruning and harvest for citrus in mid-year, and grape harvest in November, December.

General duties such as building and equipment maintenance were listed as occurring all year. Specific work such as laser levelling and other property repair after recent flooding was also listed.



### Interest in Seasonal Skilled Workforce

91 of 107 sampled businesses (85%) requested that they be supplied with information about a potential seasonal workforce program and provided contact details via email and post.

## Summary

### Limitations

There are limitations to the data collected which are unable to be checked or corrected. These include:

- 5 non-responses or incorrect responses made by businesses who filled out surveys by themselves; specifically where they have not listed closest town or distance to nearest town, and one respondent did not list their business name
- An small number of respondents who have listed their distance from Emerald where that may not be the nearest town
- Potential for results to be directed by greater participation from irrigated and dryland cropping businesses, and less comprehensive participation from beef cattle producers in the former Bauhinia and Daringa Shire districts.

### Findings

107 businesses covering 1,004,343 Ha, representing 19.5% of agricultural land use in the Central Highlands, participated in the survey.

64% of sampled agricultural businesses in the Central Highlands are operating with current vacancies. At 12 July 2008, reported vacancies totaled 79 fulltime positions (22% of the total fulltime workforce sampled) and 23 part-time casual positions.

27% of all businesses had between half and all of their positions empty.

The majority of positions vacant are for farmhands; 52. However a need for all positions bar property managers was reported.

The mean average length of vacancies reported by the 65 sampled businesses with unfilled positions was 9.9 months. However 27 businesses (42%) reported vacancies of 1 & 1/2 years or longer.

75% of all respondents stated they were unable to source labour with appropriate skills levels for their business.

Agricultural businesses reported a number of issues arising from employing unskilled men and women. These included:

- Detrimental affect on production through the reduced uptake of technology or abandonment of production technology
- Costs to business from damaged equipment / animals
- Cost to business spent in time training and supervision of unskilled labour
- Higher wages are being offered but are still not competitive
- Inability to leave the property to access healthcare or to take holidays and the detrimental effect on families (older and young)
- Children being required to miss school to help in times of heaviest workloads

11 businesses reported already using alternate strategies to seek labour. These included:

- Older employees
- Backpackers
- Sourcing from other regions undergoing hardship
- Limited uptake of 457 Visas
- Limited uptake of trainees

87% of all respondents indicated they would employ skilled people on short-term contracts. 36% nominated 1 month as a minimum suitable contract, and 35% nominated 3 months as a suitable period of employment.

68% of respondents indicated that they would employ skilled persons on a job-share basis.

Nearly all rural employers are able to offer accommodation to prospective employees. Only 14% had no accommodation. 45% had powered sites with water for caravans and campervans.

Due to the high rate of vacancies, many landholders nominated the entire year as being their heaviest workload. Cattle producers nominated May to September as their peak months for activity. Dryland cropping businesses indicated that May, June and October to February were their heaviest workloads. Irrigated cropping nominated October to March as their key months. Horticulture nominated both mid-year for citrus, and November, December for grape harvest. Business running feedlots reported a constant load throughout the year.

85% of sampled businesses (91) requested that they be supplied with information about a potential seasonal workforce and have provided their contact details. Their information has been entered as the start of a database of agricultural employees, tasks and facilities available.

## Appendix 1: Agricultural Skills Shortages – Central Highlands Survey

**Regional Employer Alliance Project (REAP) Seasonal Workforce Attraction:** Can local skills shortages in agriculture, civil construction, local government & mining be met & matched to the skill sets of the travelling population?

### SURVEY 10-12/7/08: AGRICULTURAL SKILLS SHORTAGES – CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

\*1 survey per business

Survey for businesses within the Central Highlands Regional Council area only

1. **Business Name\*:**

.....

2. **Ha/Acres of your Property(s):**

.....

Ha Ac (circle)

3. **Where are you located?** (Km from, & nearest town)

4. **What types of operations do you run on your property?** (Tick all & circle main enterprise)

Dryland broadacre cropping

Feedlot

Irrigated grains/cotton cropping

Stud cattle

Irrigated horticulture

Other (Specify)

Cattle production

5. **How many people do you employ on your property right now?\***

No.	Full Time	No.	Part Time/Casual
	Jackaroo/jillaroo		Jackaroo/jillaroo
	Farmhand		Farmhand
	Senior Farmhand		Senior Farmhand
	Farm/Property Manager		Farm/Property Manager
	Other (specify)		Harvesting
			Other (specify)

\*\*Only include paid employees

Do not include the business owner / employer

6. **Do you have a full workforce right now?**

Yes (Go to Question 8)

No

7. **If you answered NO, how many job vacancies do you have right now?**

No.	Full Time	No.	Part Time/Casual
	Jackaroo/jillaroo		Jackaroo/jillaroo
	Farmhand		Farmhand
	Senior Farmhand		Senior Farmhand
	Farm/Property Manager		Farm/Property Manager
	Other (specify)		Harvesting
			Other (specify)

8. If you answered NO, how long have you had the job vacancies?

.....

9. Have you been able to employ people with the level of skill that you require? (Comment if applicable – Eg. Was training, additional supervision required? Costs or time involved for business?)

Yes

No

.....

.....

.....

10. Would you consider employing skilled labour on a short-term contract?

No not all

3 months minimum

1 month minimum

6 months minimum

11. Would you consider employing skilled labour on a job-share basis?

Yes

No

12. Are you able to offer accommodation to your staff?

Single

Powered site for caravan

Couple

No accommodation

Family

13. In what months do you have your heaviest workload (Tick all that apply)

January

June

November

February

July

December

March

August

All Year

April

September

May

October

14. What are the main tasks undertaken in those months?

.....

15. Would you be interested in knowing more about a seasonal skilled travelling workforce?

Yes

No

If YES, Best Contact (Email or Postal):.....

## **Appendix 2: Full responses to Question 9. Have you been able to employ people with the level of skill that you require?**

- *Have now but haven't prior*
- *Sometimes you have to persevere with what you can get - we have older fellow who operates our harvester who's really good, however there's always something that's been a bit neglected. (Wife commented about inability to take holidays)*
- *I've had the current man for 7&1/2 years - if he leaves I've got Buckleys, very concerned about mine expansion*
- *So far, but we are going to have trouble when introducing high tech GPS systems*
- *Quality of person that we've been able to get has dropped over the years – a qualified carpenter, plumber etc would be good as they can think for themselves - the others just cost you money.*
- *Difficult to get staff with rural experience and affinity - commitment to our agricultural enterprises. Young people looking for quick gain, minimum inconvenience to unreasonable expectations, Backpackers are not the answer when expensive equipment & crops need ongoing or experienced staff (backpacker rolled 8 wheel articulated versatile tractor into a quarry 3 years ago & haven't used GPS on dryland operations since) 4 years problems to fill - rotate with coming and going. Would love help from tradesmen to do work on the 11 houses + sheds.*
- *Employees need common sense, many have no idea & no computer skills to use GPS - get dregs when you employ casuals, someone with a Multi Combination license would be great!*
- *We pay extremely good wages up to \$27 per hour plus holiday pay - we source through word of mouth, but also in areas that are dry and needing work - have had quite a few off farms in Deniliquin as there is no water down there.*
- *Sometimes we can find employees with similar background/skills to work unsupervised*
- *Training & supervision costs!*
- *Prepared to help train people in all parts of cattle & horse work & diesel fitting*
- *Have been able to train*
- *Poorly skilled persons that cause more damage than they are worth*
- *Skills insufficient*
- *Casual fruit pickers, problems with skills, damage gear, not worth employing*
- *Very few have skills attuned to current employers - 50+ years are the only ones left to employ*
- *Don't have skill level we need, damage occurs*
- *Must have some experience*
- *Skills were adequate*

- All people have limited skill and lack mechanical knowledge
- Nil
- Unable to get skilled labour
- Just using unskilled backpackers
- Have been relying on help from an old fellow from the Gemmies who doesn't want to retire
- Very difficult to get with correct skills
- Have employed people through the 457 Visa from South Africa, however it is a lot of work to get it all organised - need another full time but can't afford one at the current cost of labour above award wages
- Accommodation is a big seller, being close to Emerald with the housing shortage, haven't advertised - we are not able to picky and take what we get - fair amount of shift mine workers looking for part time work because of cheaper housing
- No hope at all of getting skilled staff, rely on foreign backpackers to fill short gaps
- We have 2 kids of school age & we have to pull them out of school to get work done, don't get holidays - been impossible since mine activity ramped up 3 - 5 years ago
- We dropped production during the drought & didn't advertise to fill & now are back to full water. We never use to advertise, we always found staff through word of mouth, referrals from friends, but it's not working any more. We also need mechanics, boilermakers & chippies for maintenance work.
- We know we're really lucky, had the same man for 4 years - he is valued very highly. Don't like to tell people in case he gets poached.
- While we have full employment at the moment we average a 2&1/2 month turnover in staff - there is a shortage of people in CH and too much choice of jobs
- We employ people who know absolutely nothing and train them and hope they stay for 12 months & it takes that long to make up for the productivity lost while they are learning
- We are fortunate that our next door neighbour helps us
- We currently employ a couple of young people who were expelled from the Ag College
- Can't afford to pay people rate needed for skills, \$400 +
- There is no family time, our kids have to work and miss school and we don't have holidays
- Are able to cycle through 2 businesses to keep staff during down times
- Not reliable young people
- Different tasks, different skills required
- Can't find people who know how to muster
- Unskilled, no basics

- Unskilled with motorbikes & horses
- Unskilled and not available, compete with mines
- Unrealistic and uninterested, want to go to the mines on \$100K and only stay 2 weeks
- Generally no, skills insufficient but for now okay
- Staff give short notice, skill shortage
- Have been able to find good people up 'til now, but questions the future
- Need a lot of training
- Employ son-in-law
- Have two small children and we are running the property without any help - when my husband is away as his father is very ill, I am left to start engines, run waters etc by myself with a 12 week old child.
- We are taking the bottom of the barrel and training them on site. Our current employee is a butcher by trade.
- Mainly stock help, have been okay so far
- Training school based trainees x 3
- Can't get anyone to do the work, so we do it ourselves
- Skill them on the job
- Currently have grey nomads (aged 70) who do a few hours a day; 2 Irish backpackers (building industry has fallen over) who have worked for 4 months, currently using Linda Iker at Ag Workforce Toowoomba to source staff, also use internet
- Train existing staff up; Cropping engineering area are the most difficult positions to fill, tradesmen - certainly affects production, the level of professionalism on display to students
- Labour costs too high to employ anyone else
- Preferably have a drivers license - you would be surprised how many people don't have one, some knowledge of machinery, and semi license - some real useless drongos out there, some background in farming knowledge would be handy - can get people to muster on horse, but not machinery - Shane's not 40 yet, some older people don't like orders from - we're willing to train them if they're willing to learn
- We run the place by ourselves, but need help to check waters so that we can occasionally go on holidays or for example it would mean that my husband can come with me for the birth of our second child in November (no hospital nearby)
- Have long term vacancies which placed pressure on young family unit; been trying the Grey Nomads website but haven't had much interest until a couple who will start soon.
- We have agricultural college students from Denmark who are doing 3 – 12 months of prac work; without them we'd have no staff.