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Datasets: Labour use on Australian farms, 2018–19

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Labour use on Australian farms dataset

This is the fourth release of data collected by ABARES series of farm labour surveys undertaken to improve understanding of labour use on Australian farms. The report highlights the results for total labour use and seasonality in the 2018–19 financial year. The survey included questions on the use of family labour, employees, and the background of the workforce. This data relate to Australian broadacre, dairy, vegetable, fruit, grape and nut farms in 2018–19.

Previous releases of ABARES labour survey data reported on the demand for farm labour on vegetable, horticulture and cotton farms in 2014–15 (Valle, H, Millist, N & Galeano, D 2017), for dairy farms in 2015–16 (Dufty, N, Zhao, S, Shafron, W & Valle, H 2018) and for dairy and vegetable farms across all states, together with irrigated cotton and fruit, grape and nut farms in the southern Murray Darling Basin in 2016–17 (Dufty, N, Martin, P & Zhao, S 2019). Dufty, N, Martin, P & Zhao, S (2019) also provides a detailed discussion of changes in the Australian farm workforce, usage of overseas workers and related statistics.

The data is published as a data visualisation product and presented through a Tableau dashboard product. This approach has a number of key benefits:

- Users can interrogate the data directly, using inbuilt features such as drop-down filters and map selections
- Trends in the data can be analysed within the visualisation, and all charts and underlying data can be downloaded
- Notes embedded in each page provide information about the variables and guidance on how to manipulate the visualisation
- The new product contains a greater range and depth of data — particularly relating to farm labour in regional areas.

Scope and Coverage

The Australian agricultural workforce consists of a mixture of self-employed farm operators and their family members, hired and contracted workers. ABARES farm surveys show that the proportion of hired workers in the agricultural workforce has increased over time. The period since 2010 has had significant growth in horticultural production. The number of overseas workers has increased to meet the horticulture sectors demand for seasonal labour and more broadly demand for skilled and unskilled agricultural workers (Dufty, N, Martin, P & Zhao, S 2019).

The numbers of workers needed and skills required of workers varies through the year and across farms. Labour requirements of each farm can vary through the year depending on the crops grown, types of livestock run, markets targeted, the farm's location, seasonal conditions and the extent to which farms rely on hired or family labour. The 2018–19 data set on labour use explores this variation by month for each sector, at a regional level and for a range of workforce tenures. Tables 1–4 provide a summary of the data fields covered.

Table 1 List of number of workers by sector reported in visualisations by region and workforce tenure by month

Dataset	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	Australia
Non-local casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Overseas casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Part-time workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Full-time workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2 List of number of workers by workforce tenure reported in visualisations by region and sector by month

Dataset	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	Australia
Non-local casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Overseas casual and contract workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Part-time workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Full-time workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3 List of number of workers by sector reported in visualisations by region, and workforce tenure for peak workforce

Dataset	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	Australia
Broad acre farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dairy farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Fruit, grape and nut farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vegetable farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Broadacre, dairy, fruit, grape and nut, vegetable	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4 List of number of workers by workforce tenure reported in visualisations by region and sector for peak work force

Dataset	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	Australia
Broad acre farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dairy farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Fruit, grape and nut farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vegetable farms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Labour use by Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4)

The dashboard report includes a map of Australia with filled regions at the [Australian Bureau of Statistics Statistical Areas Level 4 \(SA4\) division](#). The SA4 filled map shows the seasonal components of regional farm employment, namely total casual and contract labour and the sub-categories of local casual and contract workers, non-local Australian or New Zealand casual and contract workers and overseas casual and contract workers. The map is coloured according to the intensity of labour use across the SA4 regions, with SA4 regions employing more labour having a darker shade and SA4 regions employing less labour having a lighter shade. The map can be viewed for each month of the year for each of the three components of labour use.

References

Dufty, N, Martin, P & Zhao, S 2019, *Demand for farm workers: ABARES farm survey results 2018*, ABARES research report, Canberra, September.

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