



GRAIN WORKFORCE VISA OPTIONS

As growers often rely on overseas workers to effectively run their businesses, GrainGrowers has developed a guide with details about the visa options available to assist with the challenges of sourcing overseas labour. This resource draws on insights from the [2024 Annual Policy Survey](#) which indicated that almost 1 in 5 respondents sought to hire overseas workers. This proportion was significantly larger in WA (35%) where the scale of operations is often much larger.

Canola Glow - Eloise Bagshaw (WA)

About GrainGrowers

GrainGrowers is a national organisation working to enhance the profitability and sustainability of Australian grain farmers. This is achieved through policy and advocacy, grower engagement, thought leadership and active investment in future focused activities for all growers. Australian growers are at the heart of all that GrainGrowers does.

Disclaimer

GrainGrowers accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any loss occasioned by any person acting or refraining from action as a result of reliance on this report. In conducting the analysis in this report GrainGrowers has endeavoured to use the best information available at the date of publication. Unless stated otherwise, GrainGrowers does not warrant the accuracy of information, including any forecast or prediction in the report. Although GrainGrowers exercises reasonable care when making forecasts or predictions, factors in the process, such as future market behaviour, are inherently uncertain and cannot be forecast or predicted reliably. GrainGrowers shall not be liable in respect of any claim arising out of the information supplied in this report.

Contact us

📍 Level 19, 1 Market Street
Sydney NSW 2000

✉ PO Box Q1355 Queen
Victoria Building NSW 1230

📞 (02) 9286 2000

🌐 www.graingrowers.com.au

Follow us on

✉ @GrainGrowersLtd

📘 GrainGrowers

📷 @GrainGrowers

🌐 @Grain Growers



The Fleet - Alannah Curran (NSW)

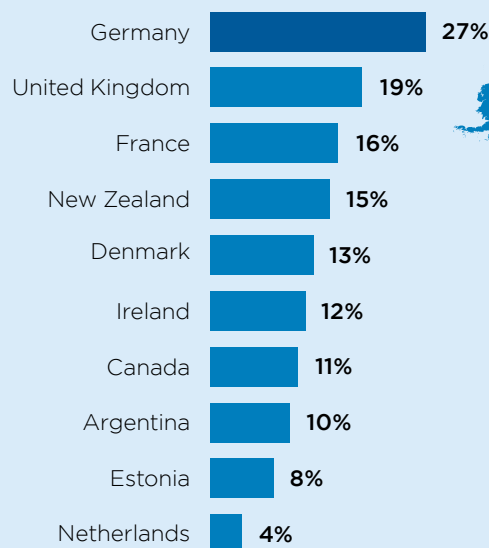
WHERE DO GROWERS RECRUIT OVERSEAS WORKERS FROM?

Germany, the UK, France, New Zealand, Denmark, Ireland, Canada and Argentina were the main countries of origin for overseas workers hired by growers in the 12 months to March 2024. All these countries have similar cropping supply chains, and by extension workforce skills, to the Australian grain industry.

The survey also highlighted that there was a broad variety of countries growers accessed labour from, where individuals had the skills and motivation to work in the grain industry. Some of these countries included Brazil, USA, Japan, Italy, Israel, Nepal and Vanuatu.

While there is a wide range of visas available to those interested in migrating to regional Australia, this resource has sought to identify the key migration avenues these overseas workers can utilise to enter Australia to work in Australia's world-class grain industry. Growers are urged to seek advice from a registered migration specialist where they are uncertain of the visa pathways most suited to their potential employees' circumstances.

Top 10 countries of origin for overseas workers



Oodnadatta Farms - Kristy Bullen (NSW)

VISA OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

(as of August 2025)

Visa Subclass		Grain Industry Occupations	Applicant Criteria	Length Of Stay	Key Requirements
OTHER	Working Holiday (Subclass 417) & Work and Holiday (Subclass 462) Maker (WHM)	Suitable applicants may be employed in roles such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers • Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers 	People aged 18-30 (or 35 for some countries) who want to work in regional Australia.	Up to 3 years (renewal required each year pending requirements).	Work 88 days in specific jobs during the first year for an extension (6 months during the second year for another extension).
TEMPORARY	Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) (Subclass 400)	Suitable for occupations with specialised skills, knowledge or experience not generally available in Australia.	<p>The employee must have engaged the employer prior to applying for this visa.</p> <p>The employee must prove they have highly specialised skills, knowledge or experience relevant to the work being performed by providing copies of their resume, licences or qualifications or a letter from the employer stating the job position and relevant duties.</p> <p>Employers may be required to prove that they have tried to find Australian workers to do the work first, as this visa can't be granted if it affects employment or training opportunities for Australian citizens or permanent residents.</p>	Up to 6 months (if longer than 3 months, a strong business case must be made).	Must only do the work or activities for which the visa was granted. The work or activity must be non-ongoing.

	Visa Subclass	Grain Industry Occupations	Applicant Criteria	Length Of Stay	Key Requirements
TEMPORARY	Skills in Demand (Subclass 482)	<p>The Skills in Demand visa superseded the Temporary Skill Shortage pathway in December 2024.</p> <p>This visa is suitable for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agronomists • Agricultural Technicians • Agricultural Consultants • Agricultural Research Scientists • Agricultural Engineers 	Skilled workers nominated by employers who have a Labour Agreement with the Australian Government.	Up to 4 years.	<p>Employer sponsorship required; can lead to permanent residency.</p> <p>Tiered visa with streams based on employee occupation.</p>
	Temporary Graduate (Subclass 485)	<p>This visa is suitable for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain, oilseed and pasture growers • Broadacre crop and livestock farmers • Agricultural Technicians • Agricultural Consultants • Agricultural Scientists • Agricultural Engineers 	International students who have recently graduated from the VET sector with qualifications that are relevant to specific occupations Australia needs or have recently graduated with a degree from an Australian higher education institution.	<p>Up to 18 months (VET).</p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p>Between 2 and 3 years depending on qualification (higher education).</p> <p>British national overseas passport holders may stay for 5 years.</p>	<p>Must be under 35 years of age, have held a Student visa in the last 6 months and have a qualification relevant to an occupation on the skilled occupation list.</p> <p>The visa starts on the date the visa is granted. The employee must find their own employment.</p>

	Visa Subclass	Grain Industry Occupations	Applicant Criteria	Length Of Stay	Key Requirements
PROVISIONAL	Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (Subclass 491)	This visa is suitable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain, oilseed and pasture growers/farm managers • Agricultural Technicians • Agricultural Consultants • Agricultural Scientists • Agricultural Engineers 	Skilled workers who want to live and work in regional Australia. Employees should contact the relevant state or territory agency directly to find out more about their nomination process. Members of the family unit of a subclass 491 visa holder are also eligible to apply.	Up to 5 years. After 3 years of work, visa holders may apply for permanency via a subclass 191 visa.	This is a points tested visa and a suitable skills assessment is required at the time of application. Employee must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to get an estimated points score. If the employee scores enough points, state and territory government agencies can see the EOI and might nominate the employee for the visa.
	Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) (Subclass 494)	Via the Employer Sponsored stream, this visa is suitable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain, oilseed and pasture growers • Broadacre crop and livestock farmers • Agricultural Technicians • Agricultural Consultants • Agricultural Scientists • Agricultural Engineers Via the Labour Agreement stream: Different Labour Agreements may be applicable to different occupations. Employers should consult with their local Designated Area Representative (DAR).	Employer-sponsored workers for jobs in identified shortage within regional areas.	Up to 5 years. If eligible, apply for permanent residence after 3 years from the time the visa is granted (via subclass 191).	Employee must be sponsored by an employer. <i>Or</i> Employer must be approved under a Labour Agreement with the Australian Government.

	Visa Subclass	Grain Industry Occupations	Applicant Criteria	Length Of Stay	Key Requirements
PERMANENT	Employer Nomination Scheme - Labour Agreement Stream (Subclass 186)	Different Labour Agreements may be applicable to different occupations. Employers should consult with their local Designated Area Representative (DAR).	Skilled workers who are nominated by their employer wanting to live and work in Australia permanently.	Permanent.	The employer must be approved under a Labour Agreement with the Australian Government.
	Skilled Independent Visa (Subclass 189)	This visa is suitable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain, oilseed and pasture growers/farm managers • Broadacre farmers/farm managers • Agricultural Technicians • Agricultural Consultants • Agricultural Scientists • Agricultural Engineers 	Invited workers with an occupation on the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) • Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL) • Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL), or • Regional Occupation List (ROL) 	Permanent.	Workers must also have a suitable skills assessment for the occupation, be invited to apply for this visa, and satisfy the points test .
	Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) (Subclass 191)	This visa is a pathway to permanent residence for subclass 491 or subclass 494 visa holders.	Allows people who have lived and worked in designated regional areas of Australia on an eligible visa, to live and work in Australia permanently.	Permanent.	Must have held a subclass 491 or 494 visa for at least three years to be eligible for this visa.



DESIGNATED AREA MIGRATION AGREEMENT (DAMA)

A **DAMA** is a formal agreement between the Australian Government and a State or Territory government or regional authority, and provides an additional pathway to access overseas workers where specific skills and occupations are in significant need. DAMA arrangements may also

include English language and age concessions and may provide pathways for permanent residency for prospective overseas employees that wish to settle in regional Australia. Of the current DAMAs, the most applicable to growers include:

DAMA:

Western Australia

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers
- Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Grain, Oilseed or Pasture Growers
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Agricultural Consultants
- Agronomists
- Agricultural Technicians
- Fencers
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Kimberley (WA)

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers
- Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Fencers
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Goldfields (WA)

Occupations:

- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Mixed Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Pilbara (WA)

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers
- Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Truck Drivers

DESIGNATED AREA MIGRATION AGREEMENT

DAMA:

South-West (WA)

Occupations:

- Crop Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Great South Coast (VIC)

Occupations:

- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Agricultural Technicians
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Product Graders (Grain Quality Technician)
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

South Australian Regional Workforce

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers
- Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Grain, oilseed and pasture growers/farm managers
- Agricultural Consultants
- Agronomists
- Agricultural Technicians
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

RDA Orana (NSW)

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Workers
- Mixed Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Agricultural Technicians
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Goulburn Valley (VIC)

Occupations:

- Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Agricultural Technicians
- Agronomists
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Far North Queensland

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Workers
- Agricultural Technicians
- Agronomists
- Forklift Drivers
- Truck Drivers

DESIGNATED AREA MIGRATION AGREEMENT

DAMA:

Townsville North Queensland

Occupations:

- Senior Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Workers
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Workers
- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Agricultural Consultants
- Agronomists
- Agricultural Technicians
- Truck Drivers

DAMA:

Northern Territory

Occupations:

- Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operators (Header Drivers)
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Workers
- Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Truck Drivers



A Magnum and a kelpie enjoying the view - Sarah Williams (VIC)

GROWER CASE STUDY

James Venning Bute SA

We operate a 5000ha grain farm, growing wheat, barley, lentils and canola. The farm has three full-time permanent staff, supported by two casual/seasonal workers during the busy period of harvest.



What are common workforce challenges in your area?

Finding skilled workers has become increasingly difficult. While we are open to upskilling people new to the industry, fewer locals are interested in farm work, and we have to search further afield to find the workers we need. It's a competitive environment for attracting reliable, capable staff, so we've had to rethink our recruitment approach, and so far, this has been successful for us.

How did you end up utilising a visa?

After struggling to find suitable local applicants, we advertised for a farm worker position online and an application was received from a South African worker willing to move to the region and with experience working in the grain industry. We hadn't previously considered hiring a worker from overseas but decided that this opportunity was a great fit for our business at the time. We decided to seek advice from a registered migration specialist who assisted us with the application process. Based on the advice we received, we utilised the local DAMA to access the Labour Agreement visa pathway.

What was your experience with the overall visa process?

The overall process was more involved than we expected. It required around 50 hours of office work to complete all the paperwork from start to finish, including business solvency checks and compliance documentation. COVID-19 caused significant delays as well. We began the process before the pandemic and only managed to bring the worker over in late 2024. However, now that we've completed the initial business checks, the process should be much smoother for any future applications. All up, it cost close to \$20,000, including migration advice and government fees.

What were the outcomes for your farm business?

Despite the hurdles faced, in the end we managed to bring a motivated, skilled and capable worker to our farm. His family has since relocated to our town, and they are willing to settle here permanently. We would love to have them as they are excellent contributors to our small community.

Did you have any tips for other growers who may be considering utilising a similar visa pathway?

It is a big commitment both in time and cost, so if you are going to commit to the process, consider your farm's needs and make sure you engage with a worker who is the right fit for you.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

For more workforce resources, related links and information, scan the QR code or visit graingrowers.com.au






Reaping Wheat at Pekina - Zoe Hanson (SA)



Stay in touch with GrainGrowers

Please visit us online or email if you would like to hear more!

-  1800 620 519
-  enquiry@graingrowers.com.au
-  www.graingrowers.com.au

-  @GrainGrowersLtd
-  GrainGrowers
-  @graingrowers
-  @Grain Growers