



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL
HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

CONSEIL CANADIEN POUR LES
RESSOURCES HUMAINES EN AGRICULTURE

IDENTIFYING NEW OR EMERGING MARKETS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE

Literature Review and Industry Findings



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1 Executive Summary

Canada's farmers continue to seek out new market opportunities in response to changing consumer needs and shifting global market demands. In order for farmers to continue to grow their businesses, they must be aware of emerging market opportunities and the required skills to be successful. The New Markets and Future Skills in Agriculture project set out to investigate new and emerging market opportunities and identify the skills required by managers to be successful in these markets.

New markets were selected from the results of a literature review, which considered the Canadian perspective, producer demographics, Canadian consumer trends, global market demands, as well as market shifts underway as a result of energy and environmental opportunities and threats. Training gaps were identified by comparing the range of human resource needs for each new market opportunity against existing training opportunities offered across Canada, as listed on the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council's inventory database of learning programs.

Phase I identified three new or emerging market opportunities in the agriculture sector: i) End Customer-Oriented Businesses, ii) High Value Production Chains, and iii) Energy-Oriented Production Chains. Farmers engaged in these three areas are taking advantage of new opportunities to grow and diversify their operations. Phase I also produced a draft competency summary, which outlined the skills and knowledge required for each of the three markets.

Phase II further developed the competency summary by gathering information from other sectors of the Canadian economy and by reviewing competencies developed for agricultural occupations in other countries. Competencies were also extracted from course curricula related to business and agriculture. The competencies were organized into six core competency groups, which included forty-six sub-competencies or skills and knowledge areas.

The competency summary was vetted by thirty-three farmers and industry representatives through a telephone survey. The farmers' feedback indicated that the competencies reflected the skills and knowledge required to be successful in the three new markets. A gap analysis was conducted to compare the skills required for success with the skills of employers and employees in the labour market.

Competency gaps were identified in the following areas:

Interpersonal Skills	▷ Demonstrate negotiation skills (persuasive communication)
Business Management Skills	▷ Develop and implement a succession plan
Marketing Management Skills	▷ Understand basic market research
	▷ Be aware of trends in global markets
	▷ Conduct and interpret market research
	▷ Demonstrate customer service skills
	▷ Demonstrate retailing and salesmanship skills
Human Resource Skills	▷ Build and maintain relationships with customers
	▷ Develop and implement a human resource management plan
	▷ Recruit, select and hire staff
	▷ Understand procedures in hiring foreign workers
	▷ Understand compensation, benefits and employment standards
	▷ Implement workplace health and safety policies
	▷ Provide effective employee orientation
	▷ Apply an effective staff retention strategy
	▷ Monitor and evaluate employee performance
	▷ Supervise and coach employees and staff

Training programs designed to address the identified competency gaps were analyzed to determine if there were learning opportunities available and suitable to address the gaps. Both informal and formal learning opportunities were considered.

The training gap analysis revealed that there are few formal learning opportunities available for working managers. The analysis also indicated a lack of agricultural human resource management training programs. While formal learning opportunities are available at universities and colleges, they target a younger, less experienced cohort and are full time programs that do not generally appeal to the needs of the respondents. In addition, these programs do not tend to focus on topics such as human resource management and advanced business management.

This project created a greater awareness of the competencies required for three emerging market opportunities. Over the long term, the project results will be used to enhance the recruitment, training and retention of qualified workers as Canada’s farms continue to adjust to changing market demands. It will also serve as a template for future projects related to competency profiles and competency development.

Based on this research, CAHRC has made the following recommendations:

Develop assessment tools for farmers to assess their own competencies

- ▷ The design and testing of assessment tools will provide producers with feedback on their competency gaps, and data will be collected to learn more about the competencies of the industry as a whole, to better design and deliver learning opportunities.

Develop competency profiles specific to each business within the new markets

- ▷ Competency profiles related to the skills, knowledge and abilities within each market, and based on the farm business tasks, will be more meaningful and applicable to farm business operators and managers. Competency profiles will not only assist producers with the recruitment of workers but will also help educators with curriculum development. In addition, they will assist in raising awareness of opportunities within the sector.

Partner with training and resource providers to enhance existing programs and resources to meet the needs of the farmer

- ▷ Enhancing learning opportunities geared to the needs of the producer will assist in mitigating the competency gaps identified by the research. The most recurring gaps were in the business management and human resource management core competencies.

