



## NEWS RELEASE

# Governments Strengthening Mental Health Services for International Agricultural Workers

Federal-provincial investment will provide new mental health resources

**October 17, 2024**

[Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness](#)

TORONTO — The governments of Canada and Ontario are investing nearly \$1.8 million over two years to provide international agricultural workers (IAWs) in Ontario with enhanced access to mental health supports in Spanish, Tagalog, French and English.

Delivered by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario Division, in close partnership with its Windsor-Essex and Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk regional branches, the International Agricultural Worker Wellness Program will support IAWs with managing stress, homesickness and isolation. The program will provide referrals to free local services, including recreational activities, primary care, counselling, support groups, in-person workshops, and more.

“Working far from home can be tough, and it’s so important that our international agricultural workers have access to the mental health supports they need,” said the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. “Through the IAW Wellness Program, we can better support these workers with tailored programs and services so they can continue to help us deliver top-quality products to Canadians, and the world.”

“Ontario respects and appreciates the international agricultural workers who call our province home and who contribute so much to our almost \$51 billion agri-food sector,” said Rob Flack, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. “The IAW Wellness Program will help these important workers access the supports and services needed to improve their quality of life and better integrate into our dynamic agri-food workforce of over 871,000 men and women.”



The program will launch in early 2025 and be delivered over two years, with resources available in Spanish, French and English in year one, expanding to include Tagalog in year two. The program will focus on the Windsor-Essex region first and then expand to Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk in year two. Both regions have high populations of IAWs. In the second year, the program will also offer support to farm operators with workshops on how to create safer workplaces.

This investment recognizes the critical contribution IAWs make in Ontario's agricultural economy. It builds on the success of the IAW Welcome Centre and the IAW Welcoming Communities Initiative.

This program is funded through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), a five-year (2023-2028), \$3.5-billion investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and resiliency of Canada's agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs designed and delivered by the provinces and territories.

## Quick Facts

- In 2023, Ontario launched the [Virtual Welcome Centre](#), a webpage of resources for IAWs available in English, Spanish and French. It includes information and links about worker rights and responsibilities, adjusting to life in Ontario, health care, human and labour trafficking, and living and working safely in the community.
- The IAW Welcoming Communities Initiative, announced in September, supports municipalities and not-for-profits in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for international agricultural and food workers. Eligible activities include introducing or enhancing translation supports and transportation services.
- The governments of Canada and Ontario also recently announced a \$178,000 expansion of the [Farmer Wellness Initiative](#) to include delivery of services in Spanish for Ontario farm workers.
- For more information about OMAFA programs and services, contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre (AICC) at 1-877-424-1300 or at [ag.info.omafa@ontario.ca](mailto:ag.info.omafa@ontario.ca).

## Quotes



"International agricultural workers are integral to Ontario's agriculture industry and food supply, so it's critical that this population has mental health support while they're living and working in our province. Since 2022, CMHA's team at Agriculture Wellness Ontario has been working to reduce mental health stigma and meet the needs of the agricultural community. We're delighted to work with our branches to offer this new program for international agricultural workers."

**- Camille Quenneville**

**Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division**

"Mental health care plays a crucial role in supporting the well-being of migrant workers, who often face unique challenges like family separation and cultural transitions. It's heartening to see the governments of Canada and Ontario develop the IAW Wellness Program. By offering services in their first languages, this initiative ensures that migrant workers feel understood and supported, which is vital for their mental health. This empowers individuals to navigate daily challenges and fosters a more inclusive and compassionate community for everyone. Such efforts are essential for building a society that values the well-being of every migrant worker."

**- Martin Varela**

**Chairman, Migrant Worker Community Program**

## **Additional Resources**

[Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#)

[Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness](#)

[Grow Ontario](#)

[Agriculture Wellness Ontario](#)

## **Media Contacts**

**Meaghan Evans**

Communications Branch

[OMAFRA.media@ontario.ca](mailto:OMAFRA.media@ontario.ca)



**Makena Mahoney**

Minister's Office

[Makena.Mahoney@ontario.ca](mailto:Makena.Mahoney@ontario.ca)

**Annie Cullinan**

Director of Communications

Office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

[Annie.Cullinan@agr.gc.ca](mailto:Annie.Cullinan@agr.gc.ca)

**Media Relations**

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Ottawa, Ontario

[613 773 7972](tel:6137737972)

[1-866-345-7972](tel:18663457972)

[aafc.mediarelations-relationsmedias.aac@agr.gc.ca](mailto:aafc.mediarelations-relationsmedias.aac@agr.gc.ca)

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