

2022 Kansas Agriculture Workforce Survey Overview

A lack of a skilled agriculture workforce is a top inhibitor of growth and expansion for many Kansas agriculture entities. To help support growth in agriculture, the Kansas Department of Agriculture seeks to help the industry better understand workforce needs among agricultural employers in the state. To link the supply of human capital to the needs of Kansas agribusiness enterprises, KDA conducted the first Kansas Agriculture Workforce Needs Assessment Survey in 2015 with the results released in 2016. As needs change over time, a second survey was conducted in 2022. The survey was analyzed by the Agricultural Land Use Survey Center at Kansas State University.



The survey was emailed to over 25,000 businesses with 1,192 choosing to participate. Businesses participating employ 27,466 individuals in Kansas and 9,244 outside of Kansas. Respondents were asked to self-select the major category that applied to their business.

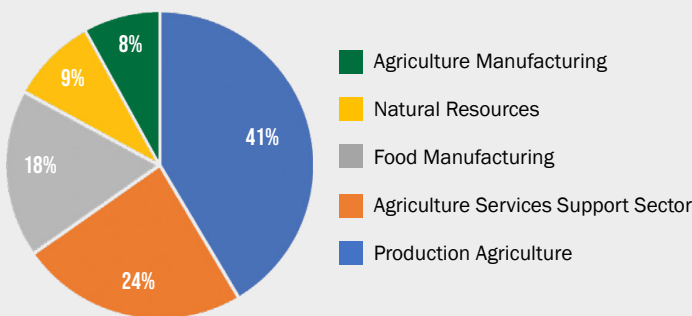
According to estimates prepared by KDA and based on the IMPLAN economic data model, the agriculture, food and food processing sector has a total direct output of \$53.4 billion and supports 136,227 jobs in Kansas. Overall, these industries and their ag-related businesses support 256,080 jobs, or 14% of the entire workforce in the state of Kansas. They provide a total economic contribution of \$76 billion, roughly 14% of Gross Regional Product.

Key Questions

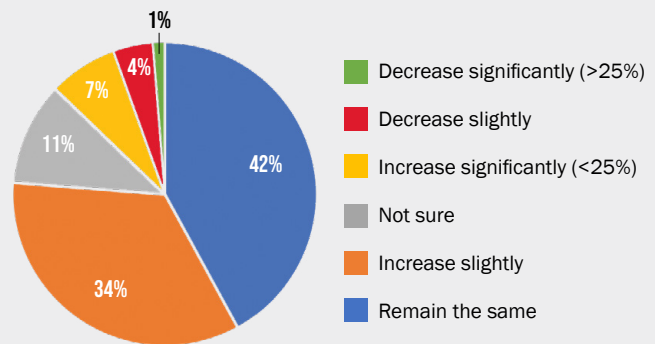
The 2022 survey focused on two overarching questions:

- What is the likely source of future employment demand from the agriculture industry for workers?
- What programs and strategies can be developed and marketed within the state to respond to the needs of the agriculture sector so that the knowledge and skills acquired by potential employees match future employment opportunities?

Participant Major Business Categories



Expected Workforce Change in the Next 12 Months

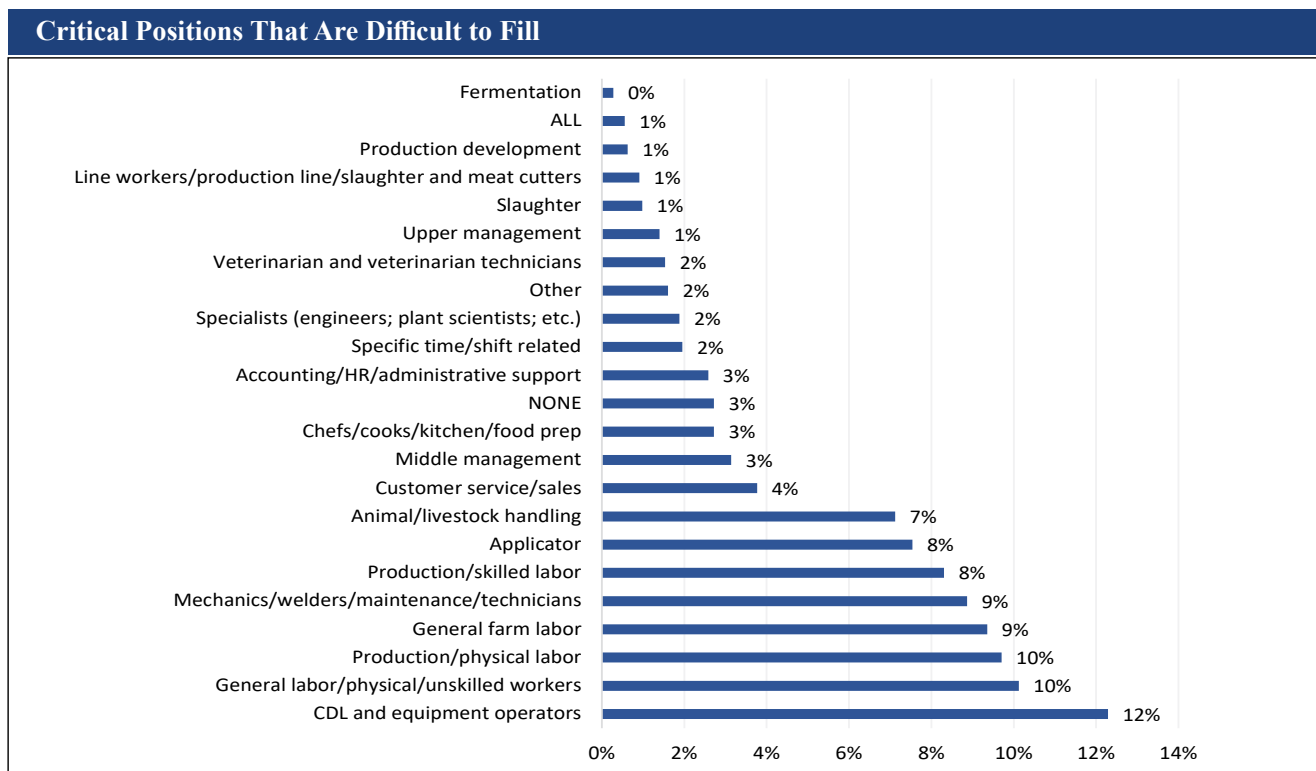


Workforce Changes

When asked about future workforce, 42% of respondents expect the size of their workforce to remain the same over the next 12 months. Thirty-four percent of respondents expect the workforce to increase slightly, defined as less than 25%, over the next 12 months.

Of the critical positions that respondents said were difficult to fill, CDL and equipment operators were selected by over 12% of the respondents. Around 8–10% of respondents selected each of the labor categories, which included general unskilled labor, production physical labor, general farm labor and production skilled labor. Kansas agriculture remains a physically demanding industry with nearly two-thirds of respondents stating the average job, in their place of business, was moderately to intensely physically demanding.

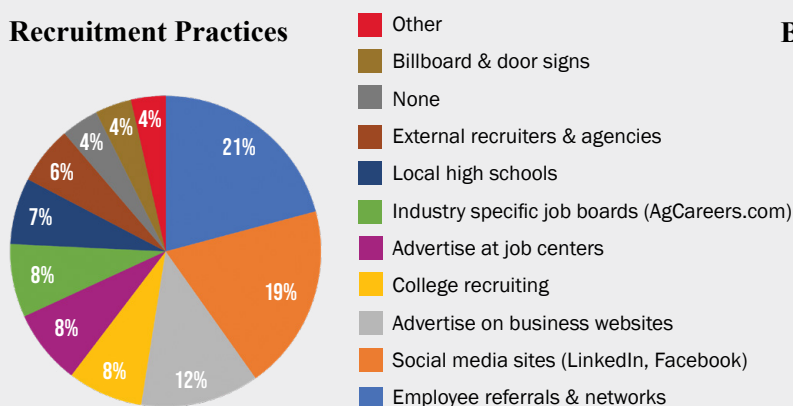
Eighty-four percent of respondents indicated their hourly pay rates increased over the past two years. Nearly 40% provided increases of \$3-5/hour.



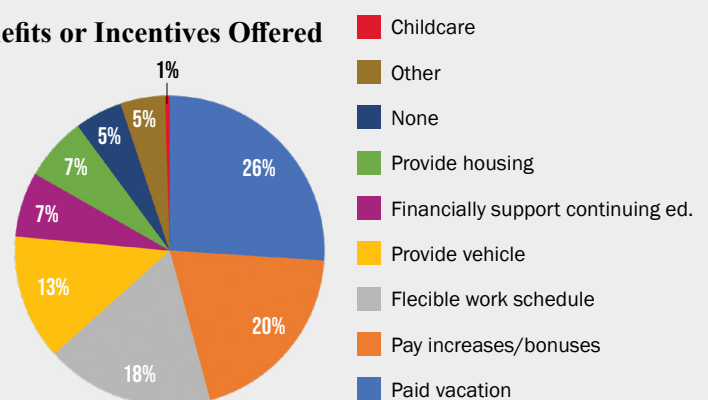
Recruitment and Retention

With low unemployment numbers in the state, respondents noted a variety of recruitment practices and future opportunities for hires. Slightly over 20% of respondents used employee referrals and networks, while 19% used social media sites as a major component of their recruitment strategy. The top employee benefits and incentives include paid vacation, performance pay/bonuses and a flexible work schedule.

Recruitment Practices



Benefits or Incentives Offered



To offset the lack of skilled workers, some respondents are currently hiring non-traditional workers to fill the void. Hiring non-traditional workers would expand the hiring pool for ag businesses. It was noted there are a number of barriers to hiring non-traditional workers; 13% cited government paperwork as a barrier.

Businesses are utilizing on-the-job training, in-house training, apprenticeship programs and customized community college/technical training or education programs to enhance worker skills.

Workforce Priorities

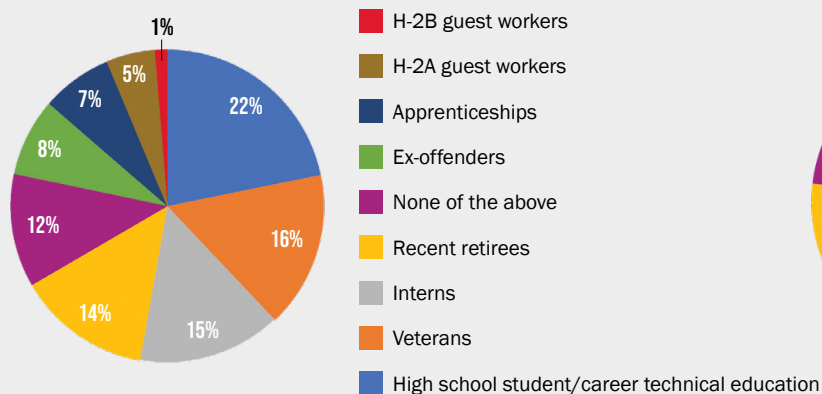
When asked about their top two workforce priorities over the next five years, 27% of respondents selected hiring a capable and reliable staff and 18% selected business growth/sustainability. This is followed closely with 17% focusing on retention and 16% on succession planning. Ten percent of respondents selected hiring for critical positions and specific skills, and 7% said skills and training are priorities while only 4% selected automation and technology as one of the two top priorities for the next five years.

Recommendations

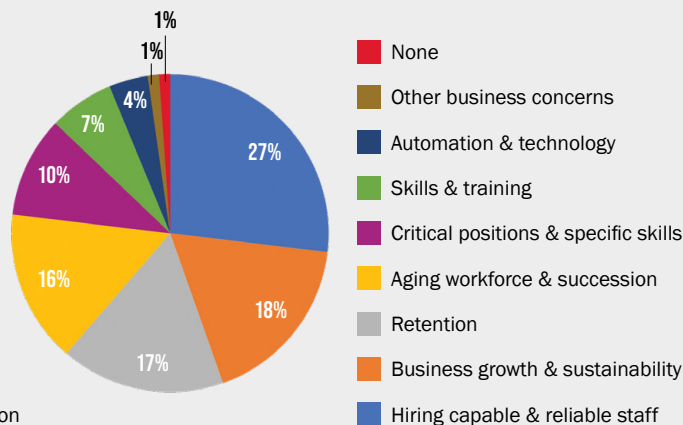
The following are recommendations based on the results of the survey:

- Consider offering current employees a wage enhancement for “successful” employee referrals, defining “successful” as referrals that stay over a specified time period or meet some other merit-based criteria. Over 20% of respondents said they use employee referrals as a recruitment tool; however, only 7% said they offered a wage enhancement for referrals.
- Employers and state agencies need to work together to develop or find programs so that businesses may implement successful on-the-job training. Over 40% of respondents use on-the-job training to increase their workforce’s skills.
- Expand marketing of KansasWORKS and Kansas Department of Commerce marketing efforts. Almost 70% of respondents said they were not aware of any of the training programs listed in the survey.
- When promoting careers in agriculture, consider long-term approaches, such as immersion and apprenticeship programs and mentoring opportunities. Establishing relationships with community youth will create lasting impressions and good will well beyond the amount of the initial investment. These long-term relationships will have an exponential impact.

Currently Hiring Non-Traditional Workers



Top Workforce Priorities Over the Next Five Years



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The survey was conducted by the Agricultural Land Use Survey Center at Kansas State University. It was offered to agribusinesses, manufacturers and producers of agricultural products in Kansas and was open from February 18, 2022, to April 11, 2022. The survey recorded 1,192 responses from across the state.