



Agricultural Consultant/Scientist

Australia

ANZSCO 2341-11,12

December 2010

Current labour market rating

Shortage

Previous labour market rating (Oct 2009)

Shortage

Comments

Shortages of agricultural consultants and scientists have persisted over the past three years and the labour market tightened further in 2010. Surveyed employers experienced particular difficulty filling positions for mid-level to senior roles and positions in more remote areas.

Survey results

- Employers filled 40 per cent of surveyed vacancies, compared with 65 per cent in October 2009 and considered an average of 1.1 applicants per vacancy to be suitable, compared with 1.4 in October 2009.
- Both the number of suitable applicants per vacancy and the proportion of vacancies filled varied depending on the level of the role and the location. Employers experiencing less difficulty filling entry or graduate positions, and vacancies in regional centres, than those in more remote regional locations.
- Vacancies in remote areas generally attracted a small response and some employers did not attract any applicants. A number of employers commented on the difficulty of attracting suitable applicants to remote locations.

Reasons for rating

- There were low numbers of suitable applicants and the majority of vacancies were unfilled.
- A sizeable number of employers did not attract any applicants.
- Nearly all employers commented on the tightness of the labour market for agronomists and agricultural scientists.

Why applicants were unsuitable

- The main reason employers considered applicants to be unsuitable was unwillingness to relocate for new roles.
- Employers reported that applicants were also unsuitable due to a skills mismatch, with most positions requiring a highly specific skill set, including applied and laboratory research experience, knowledge of specific types of crop, and ability to work with certain types of equipment associated with specific research and crops.

Demand and supply trends

- Employer comments suggest demand for agricultural consultants and scientists is strongest in those areas of Australia that have emerged from drought conditions, especially in the Eastern States. Even so, demand remains strong in Western Australia where drought conditions persist.

- These comments are consistent with the DEEWR Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) which shows there was a marked increase in the level of advertised vacancies for agricultural consultants and scientists over the 12 months to November 2010.
- 2006 Census figures indicate there are around 6000 agricultural consultants and scientists employed in Australia. This small number makes it difficult to accurately measure changes over time, although the ABS Labour Force Survey suggests employment levels have been relatively stable over the five years to November 2010.
- Some employers commented that the supply of agricultural consultants and scientists was adversely affected by drought conditions which saw many employees move to other industries.
- Graduate completions have been falling in recent years, and employer comments indicate there are more jobs available than there are students graduating from agricultural degrees.
- Employers commented that the pool of agricultural graduates has declined in recent years due to students moving away from agriculture and into environmental studies.



Agricultural Technician

Australia

ANZSCO 3111-11

December 2010

Current labour market rating

Recruitment difficulty

Previous labour market rating (Oct 2009)

Shortage

Comments

This is a particularly difficult labour market to research. The ANZSCO title Agricultural Technician is a catch all for occupations in the agriculture sector which are at the technician skill level – that is, they are commensurate with an Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma. The code includes diverse tasks across quite different agricultural industries and includes dairy technician, field crop tester, poultry technical officer and artificial insemination technician. It is likely there is little transferability across specialisations and DEEWR's research is unable to survey all aspects of this occupation.

Research results suggest the labour market has eased over the past year, with higher numbers of suitable applicants, especially in entry level positions. Even so, some employers experienced difficulty filling positions, especially those in more remote locations and those requiring specific agricultural knowledge and experience.

Survey results

- Around 70 per cent of surveyed vacancies were filled, unchanged compared with October 2009.
- Employers considered 2.1 applicants per vacancy to be suitable, on average, a significant rise compared with the 1.4 suitable applicants per vacancy in 2009. It is notable, however, that the response to advertising varied significantly with some employers attracting little response while others received large numbers so applicants (some in excess of 50).
- Both the number of suitable applicants per vacancy and the proportion of vacancies filled varied across level of role according to location, with employers experiencing less difficulty filling positions in metropolitan and major regional centres than in more remote regional locations.

Reasons for rating

- There were slightly more than two suitable applicants per vacancy.
- Although some employers experienced difficulty filling positions, several employers commented on the ease of filling positions due to high numbers of applicants.

Why applicants were unsuitable

- The main reason employers considered applicants to be unsuitable related to locational issues, with some employers unwilling to hire non-local applicants, and some applicants unwilling to relocate for positions.
- The majority of employers placed greater weight on experience than on qualifications, with the exception of those seeking to fill research officer positions which generally required a Bachelor degree.

- As a result employers considered a number of applicants to be unsuitable due to lack of experience in the relevant field.
- Some employers also considered applicants to be unsuitable because they lacked general skills including computer and communication skills.

Demand and supply trends

- Employer comments suggest demand for agricultural technicians has increased in those areas of Australia that have emerged from drought conditions, especially in the eastern states.
- These comments are consistent with the DEEWR Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) which shows there was a marked increase in the level of advertised vacancies for agricultural technicians over the 12 months to November 2010.
- 2006 Census figures indicate there are around 2000 Agricultural Technicians employed in Australia. This small number makes it difficult to accurately measure changes over time, although the ABS Labour Force Survey suggests employment levels have been relatively stable over the five years to November 2010.
- Some employers commented that the supply of agricultural technicians has been adversely affected by the mining boom as a result of agricultural workers moving to the mining industry.