

Webinar summary: migration options

APL hosted a webinar for pig producers on 17 March 2023 to learn more about suitable visa pathways for on-farm roles and the process of hiring staff from overseas. Below are some of the key points.

Key visa options

There are many visa options available. Those commonly used include:

- Visitor visas (e.g. working holiday maker/backpacker)
- Working and skilled visas
 - Standard skilled visa pathways (temporary, regional, permanent)
 - Pork Industry Labour Agreement (PILA; senior stockperson on skilled visa 482, 494 or 186)
 - [Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme](#) (lower skilled)
 - Other temporary activity visas (e.g. [408](#))

Skilled visas require the person to work in an eligible occupation. Under the PILA, the applicant must meet the minimum qualifications and skills criteria detailed in the [template](#) (at least AQF Certificate III Pork Production or equivalent and/or a minimum duration of recent and relevant experience).

The 482 and 494 are both skilled visas, with some differences. The overall cost of the 494 is lower, however its visa processing time is currently slower. The 494 offers Medicare benefits to the applicant and doesn't require an employer to nominate them for permanent residency.

What's involved

- The steps involved in sourcing an employee from overseas can include: recruitment and screening, compiling necessary documentation, lodgement of application, nomination and visa application with Home Affairs, visa grant then arrival in Australia.
- If you appoint someone to give you immigration assistance, they must be a registered migration agent or a legal practitioner.
- Processing times vary depending on Departmental backlogs and whether the Department is satisfied with supporting documents. Currently Labour Agreement assessments may take 1-3 months, and visa processing another 1-6 months depending on the visa. [Home Affairs processing times](#) are updated monthly.
- Cost includes Department of Home Affairs and professional (agent or legal) fees. This varies depending on the visa type and assistance required. Department charges include sponsorship and nomination fees, as well as a levy (Skilling Australians Fund).

Things to be aware of

- Be mindful of visa requirements and the ability of prospective applicants to provide good evidence of relevant skills, qualifications and prior work experience, prior to nominating. The Department will verify documents.
- [Labour market testing](#) has to be done as per the Department's rules.
- Explain payslips to new visa holders once they start working, to make sure they are understood.
- Overseas countries may also have their own rules e.g. Philippines requires exit clearance.

Q&A

1. Having been out of the industry for a few years, I am looking to understand the current options open to employers. I was familiar with the 457 but not sure what has taken its place since covid etc

- The 457 was replaced with the 482. Key differences are: labour market testing and the training contribution is now a levy.

2. What visas are the best for UK farm labourers?

- Depends on previous experience and if in Australia already or not
- Working holiday maker 417, which could transition to the 482 after gaining required skills and experience
- Or if they have skills and experience, could come on a 482.

3. We currently have a worker on a PALM visa who we employ through a contract labour hire company. Are we able to sponsor him ourselves and bring his family over also?

- To qualify for a piggery stockperson role under the Pork Industry Labour Agreement they would need to accumulate the 18 months work experience and undertake the Certificate III Pork Production to be eligible for 482, and undertake an English test. Family could then accompany.
- The [408 \(COVID-19 Pandemic event\) visa](#) was previously an option to extend their time, however this visa will be closing on 1 February 2024.

4. Are lower skilled workers apart from Piggery Technicians allowed, like broadacre farm workers, mechanics and welders?

- For mechanics and welders, could look at standard skilled visa pathway. Welders need a skills assessment.
- Options may exist in other Labour Agreements including regional labour agreements (DAMAs) depending on the location of the business. Case by case.

Links to further information

- Australian Pork Limited website <https://www.australianpork.com.au/workforce/hiring-overseas-workers>
- Visa processing times <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-processing-times/overview>
- Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme <https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/>
- Backpacker visas – updates <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/whm-program/latest-news>
- Pandemic event visa (408) <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/temporary-activity-408/australian-government-endorsed-events-covid-19> *Please note that the Australian government has announced that this visa will close to all applications on 1 February 2024, following transitional measures.