



Wide Bay Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry **Workforce Development Plan**



**Jobs
Queensland**
Future skills. Future work. Future Queensland.



Bundaberg
Fruit & Vegetable
Growers

Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of Country

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples in the state of Queensland and acknowledges the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the land and sea. We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures, resilience and strengths. We specifically acknowledge the unique history and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We are dedicated to the inclusion of cultural knowledge and values as critical factors in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions to support First Nations people.

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Thank you

Jobs Queensland would like to acknowledge the valuable input of Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Limited.

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Introduction



In 2022, the Queensland Government launched the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032 (QWS)*¹ to foster the state's growth and economic prospects while addressing present and future workforce needs. This strategy highlights the importance of collaboration and partnerships in assisting industries and communities across Queensland to cultivate skilled and flexible workforces. The 'Grow Your Own' (GYO) Regional Workforce Program, part of the local solutions focus area of the QWS, seeks to empower local stakeholders and industry leaders to pinpoint workforce requirements and drive regional workforce initiatives. The GYO program facilitates identifying the necessary skills to fulfil industry demands and support regional economic objectives.

Research by Jobs Queensland (JQ) has found that connection to community and family is important to Queensland workers. A strong connection to a community or region often motivates individuals to remain living and working locally. When people, especially families, are established with local services, have partners employed nearby and have children enrolled in local schools, they are generally hesitant to relocate to a different area.² This creates a solid basis for the GYO Regional Workforce Program model, which motivates regions to enhance their local population's skills and abilities to meet the present and future demands of local industries.

Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturers are a strong example of the intersection between the agriculture and manufacturing industries, with local growers supported to expand operations to manufacture their own produce through a well-established ecosystem. With close proximity to the expanding Asia-Pacific export market, a skilled workforce and a willingness to leverage technology, the Wide Bay region's growers aim to maximise year-round growing conditions for a variety of crops by increasing productivity and profitability wherever possible.

The *Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027* identified that all levels of government recognise agriculture as a priority area. Future projections anticipate a shift in the workforce composition, with a decrease in the number of owners and operators and an increase in demand for technicians, paraprofessionals and professionals.

Jobs Queensland has several publications relating to the manufacturing industry, including *Advancing Manufacturing: Exploring the human element of the journey*, which illustrates the opportunities and challenges faced by Queensland manufacturers as they progress toward Industry 4.0.

Using an industry-led approach, JQ partnered with the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association to implement local solutions for the Wide Bay region's food and beverage manufacturing industry. These solutions aim to assist the industry's transition to a stronger future by addressing current workforce availability, industry demand, existing business capabilities and future skills requirements.

In 2023, this partnership conducted a detailed review of the current workforce, resulting in *Grow Your Own Workforce, Region and industry environmental scan, Wide Bay Food and Beverage Manufacturing* released in March 2024. This review provided a historical and point-in-time analysis of employment and training data trends, and identified workforce challenges and opportunities.

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1. Queensland Government. (2022). *Good people Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/ff453627-3e2a-4dc5-96c5-a3e7bdf963fa/final-queensland-workforce-strategy_2022-2032.pdf?ETag=01bfdc37789b9d96bf8baeda54b32273
 2. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Supporting individuals in the transition to future work framework*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/supporting-individual-transition.pdf>

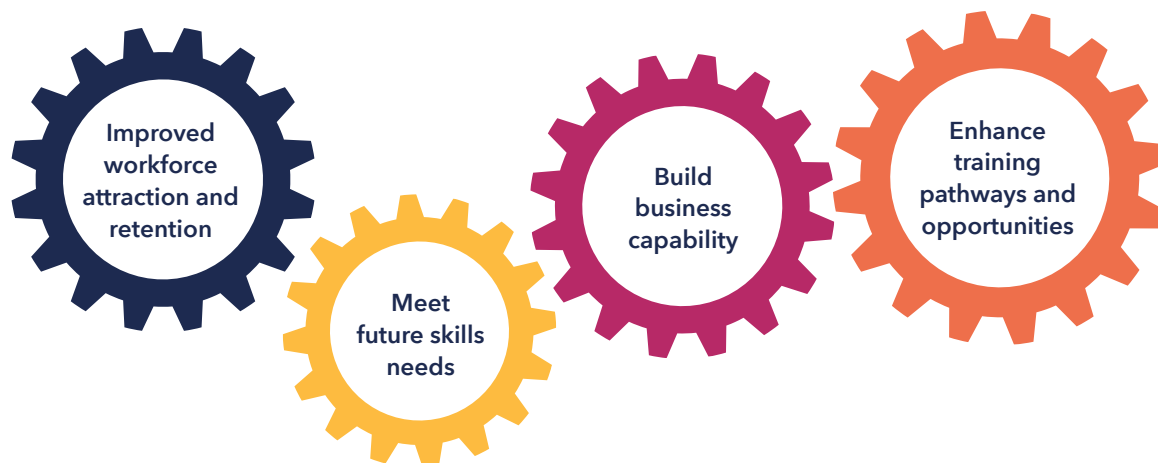
Figure 1 Developing the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing workforce plan



Through consultations led by industry and community stakeholders, common themes emerged regarding workforce development, training programs and business operations. Despite these challenges, the industry expressed a desire to collaborate with government and training providers to strategise for the future. This collaborative approach yielded recommendations, priorities and actionable strategies aimed at enhancing the future workforce of the Wide Bay region's food and beverage manufacturing industry.

The region is now prepared to implement 18 distinct strategies across four key areas (refer to Figure 2). This collaborative, industry-driven initiative establishes a robust foundation for an industry poised for growth and sustained prosperity.

Figure 2 Key area of focus



- **Improve workforce attraction and retention**

- o Addressing challenges like seasonal work appeal, limited full-time opportunities and awareness of diversity benefits.
- o Emphasising opportunities such as offering flexible work arrangements, promoting new technology jobs and connecting with migrant support programs.
- o Challenges include lack of career progression, work-life balance and negative industry stigma.
- o Opportunities involve promoting work-life balance arrangements, enhancing career pathways and identifying suitable roles for longer workforce retention.

- **Meet future skills needs**

- o Addressing challenges such as industry automation, technology and artificial intelligence (AI).
- o Seizing opportunities through collaboration with local schools, promoting future skills and developing mentoring programs within the industry.

- **Build business capability**

- o Challenges encompass leadership capability, succession planning and accessing wellness coaches and mentors.
- o Opportunities include risk management planning, leadership and soft skills training, promoting mentoring programs and collaborating regionally for business growth.

- **Enhance training pathways and opportunities**

- o Challenges include lack of qualified trainers, course relevancy, training costs and onboarding.
- o Opportunities include developing generic training resources, strengthening school-industry linkages and co-designing industry-relevant micro-credentials.

As the industry grows, there is an increased demand for skilled workers. Challenges in the labour market for the industry include attracting and retaining employees with the required skills and capabilities. It is essential that these workers can adapt to short-term seasonal demands and are both available and willing to work under the offered conditions and pay.

Developing a workforce plan is a crucial initiative to sustain the region's competitiveness and ensure that the residents can access the training needed to thrive in both living and working locally.

Overview

The Wide Bay region plays a significant role in Queensland's food and beverage manufacturing industry. It accounts for 3.8 per cent of the state's gross value of production (GVP) and provides employment for approximately 2169 individuals.³

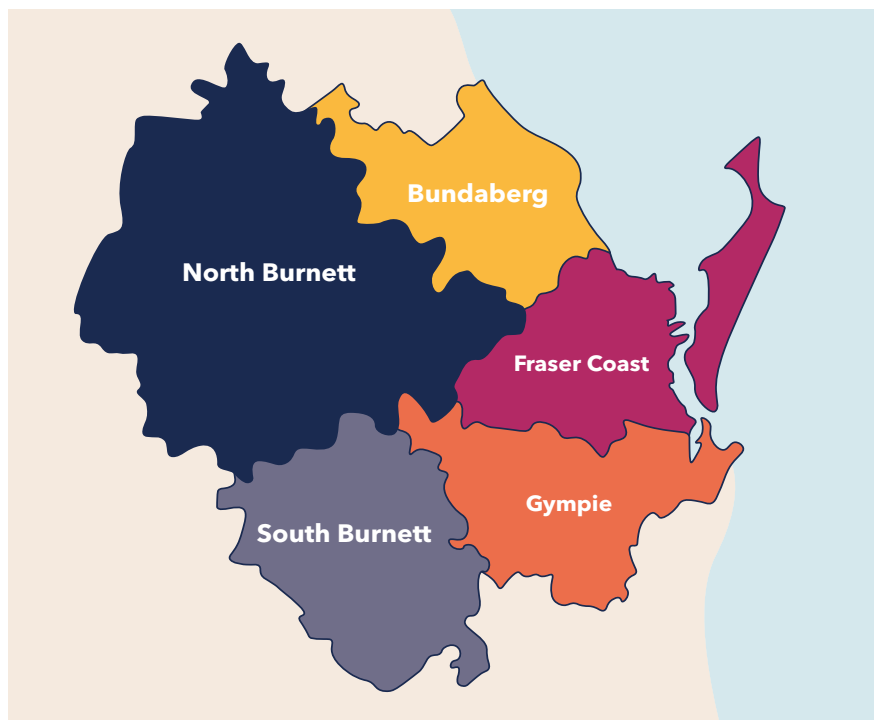
The region serves as a major provider of fresh, natural and manufactured products, with its strengths evident in its agriculture, manufacturing, skilled workforce and supporting industries. The industry is poised for growth, with key focus areas including sustainable packaging, enhanced land management, direct-to-consumer marketing and harnessing advancements in precision agriculture.

The Wide Bay Statistical Area 4 (SA4) region covers 48,502 square kilometres, or around 2.8 per cent of Queensland's total land area. The region encompasses the five local government areas of Bundaberg, North Burnett, South Burnett, Gympie and the Fraser Coast. Within this area are the five Statistical Area 3 (SA3) regions of Bundaberg, Burnett, Gympie-Cooloola, Hervey Bay and Maryborough.

Figure 3

Map of the Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 11 September 2023, Queensland Statistical Areas, Level 4 (SA4), 2021 - Wide Bay (ASGS Code 319) <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/10706/qld-sa4-asgs-2021-wide-bay.pdf>



The food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay region contributes to a varied regional economy, featuring a mix of well-established industries alongside new and emerging ones. With over 990 manufacturing businesses and 2742 agribusinesses in the region, utilising over 2.83 million hectares of agricultural land, the industry is well placed to thrive.⁴ The industry contributed over \$1.69 billion to the Queensland economy in the 2020-2021 financial year. The region's agricultural and manufacturing industries are advantageously positioned to manufacture a diverse array of agrifood and beverage products. This is facilitated by the region's distinctive environment and its proximity to the Asia-Pacific export markets.

3. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Trade and Investment Queensland, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, Regional Development Australia and Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers. (2022). *Wide Bay Burnett Region Agrifood and Beverage Capabilities - 2022 Snapshot*. Brisbane and Bundaberg: Queensland Government and Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers. <https://bfvg.com.au/download/wide-bay-burnett-regional-agrifood-beverage-capabilities-snapshot-2022/> Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/>

4. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2023). *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>

Regional population and employment characteristics

Population

The Wide Bay regional population has been steadily increasing since 2012.⁵ The region is now home to 317,500 people; 7.1 per cent of those identify as Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples, 13 per cent were born overseas (7.6 per cent are from English-speaking backgrounds), and 10 per cent require assistance with core activities.⁶ By 2026, the region is expected to grow by a further 7675 people to a population of 325,175. This is below Queensland's annual average growth rate (0.6 per cent to 1.4 per cent respectively).

The Wide Bay region has a significant ageing population, with the median age of 49.2 years, more than 10 years higher than the Queensland average. This is projected to increase to 50.4 years by June 2026. By 2026, there will be an estimated 97,047 people aged 65 years and older residing in the region. The growing ageing population will lead to increased workforce demand within service industries, which in turn will increase competition for skills and labour.



5. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2023). *Collection: Population (ERP) persons only*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-estimates/regions>

6. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2023). *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>

Population profile

317,500
persons



Estimated total population 30 June 2022

Population growth
from
June 2017



Projected
population growth
to 2026



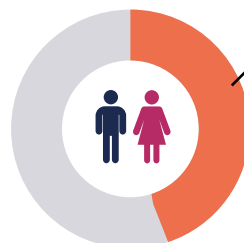
Projected population
growth of **2.4%** is below
the projected growth rate
of **8.4%** for Queensland



Median age
49.2 years



which is more than 10 years
higher than the state average



143,568
people employed
in the region in
September 2023

In 2021 there were



83,360
persons
aged 65 and older
in the Wide Bay region

which is expected
to increase to

97,047
by 2026



7.1%
Aboriginal peoples or
Torres Strait Islander people
residing in the region



13%
were born
overseas



10%
reported requiring
assistance with core
activities

Employment

The Wide Bay region's working-age population is 56.5 per cent, which is lower than the Queensland average of 64.4 per cent. The employment-to-population ratio is also lower than the state average (51.2 per cent to 63.5 per cent comparatively). Wide Bay has a larger percentage of people aged 45–64 years (30.8 per cent) and 65 years and older (30 per cent) in the workforce, compared to the proportion of those entering the workforce. The 15–24 years age group entering the workforce is currently at 14.1 per cent, which will see a shortfall of people entering the workforce to replace those who are retiring.⁷

Unemployment in the region is 5.7 per cent, which is higher than the state's at 3.8 per cent.⁸ The top five employing industry industries in the region are health care and social assistance, retail trade, education and training, construction, and accommodation and food services. The top five occupations are professionals, community and personal service workers, managers, technicians and trades workers, and labourers.⁹

Employment characteristics

143,568
persons



Total number of employed in the region in September 2023



7.6%
total youth unemployment
rate, September 2023

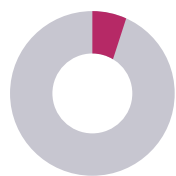
Working-age population



56.5%



which is **lower** than the state average of
64.4%



5.7%

total unemployment
rate, September 2023



which was a **decrease** from
7.5% in May 2023



50.6%

or 72,523
total female workers,
September 2023



49.4%

or 71,045
total male workers,
September 2023

**By 2026,
there will be**



15,926

is the projected number of
new Jobs by 2026

**Working age population
will increase by**



3528

persons



which could leave a
shortfall of

12,398

workers

7. Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023). *Labour Market Insights, 2023, Wide Bay*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/regions/all-regions-abs-sa4/?region=Wide+Bay>

8. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2023). *Queensland Regional Profiles. Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>

9. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/>

Business profile

The Wide Bay region is home to diverse businesses that shape its labour market. As of 30 June 2023, the region had a total of 23,815 registered businesses.¹⁰ The majority of businesses, or 61.9 per cent, were non-employing (including sole traders and partnerships with no employees) enterprises. Small businesses with 1–4 employees made up 24.9 per cent, and small businesses with 5–19 employees made up 10.6 per cent. These small businesses contribute greatly to the economic foundation of the Wide Bay region, providing essential goods and services while also offering significant employment opportunities.



Small businesses play a crucial role in advancing regional development and generating significant employment opportunities throughout Queensland.

Strengthening the resilience of small businesses is pivotal for maintaining a robust economy. Equally essential is developing entrepreneurial skills and capabilities among owners and managers, which will enable small businesses to seize emerging opportunities effectively.

The more established medium-sized businesses with 20–199 employees comprised 2.6 per cent of the total number of businesses. In contrast, large businesses with 200+ employees were relatively few, contributing only 0.1 per cent of the total number of businesses. However, their impact on employment and economic stability within the region is significant. The distribution of businesses, based on their size, closely mirrors the pattern observed across Queensland.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry was the dominant industry in Wide Bay's business landscape at 24.4 per cent. Construction (16.9 per cent) and rental, hiring and real estate services (9.2 per cent) were also significant industries.

In the dynamic landscape of the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry, businesses have confronted unforeseen challenges, such as the impact of COVID-19, supply chain disruption, economic downturn and legislative changes. These challenges underscore the importance of cultivating robust business capabilities and continuity planning to effectively handle uncertainty.

10. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2023). *Queensland Regional Profiles. Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>



Business skills and capabilities are critical for economic growth in a global marketplace with complex value chains and supply chains. Enterprises, particularly smaller ones, must develop their business skills and capabilities to ensure their ongoing viability and assist their expansion.¹¹



The new *Queensland Small Business Strategy 2024-27* focuses on providing additional support to Queensland small businesses, many of which are affected by cost-of-living pressures. It is designed to reduce operating costs, increase opportunities, build business resilience and capability and promote diversity within the sector.

As Queensland's economy experiences a dynamic phase of growth, the strategy will also help small businesses capitalise on procurement and supply chain opportunities from the Queensland Government's Big Build program over the next four years. Over three years, the strategy will implement 20 actions across four focus areas to help small businesses grow and thrive.

11. Jobs Queensland. (2019). *Future work, future jobs: Preparing Queensland for the evolution of work*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/future-work-future-skills-report.pdf>

Workforce diversification

A key element outlined in the QWS is increasing workforce participation for all Queenslanders. The QWS also emphasises the importance of supporting employers and industries in their efforts to diversify their workforce and grow. While the Wide Bay region has a significant ageing population, the foundation for future workers lies in attracting and retaining the locally based younger demographic and the attraction of working-age talent. The region faces the challenge of balancing the needs of its current demographic with the necessity to rejuvenate and expand its labour pool. This involves creating attractive opportunities and career pathways that can entice young professionals to either stay in or relocate to the Wide Bay region.

It also includes providing resources and initiatives to help businesses implement inclusive hiring practices that welcome a broad range of candidates, including women, people with disabilities, First Nations people, and individuals from various cultural backgrounds. By fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace, employers can benefit from a wider range of skills, perspectives and innovative ideas.

Embracing diversity not only strengthens internal cohesion but also contributes to a more equitable and prosperous community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed.



Women

When considering career decisions, women often prioritise their impact on family dynamics, recognising that transitioning into a new role often involves significant adjustments to their daily lives. Overcoming the barriers that women encounter requires a robust support system, including flexible working arrangements that accommodate caring responsibilities. This flexibility is essential for balancing work and family life, enabling women to pursue career opportunities without compromising their caregiving roles.

Employers play a pivotal role in facilitating this process by providing access to a wide range of

resources, opportunities for career development and essential support mechanisms. Connecting newly hired women with experienced staff members who can offer mentorship and opportunities for social integration within the organisation further strengthens this support. By fostering flexible working arrangements for returning parents, supportive networks and inclusive environments, organisations empower parents to navigate career shifts with confidence, resilience and a sense of belonging. Expanding flexible arrangements to include male staff increases opportunities for enhancing female participation in the workforce by improving the share of a caring/parental load.



People with disability

Finding suitable employment opportunities can be challenging for individuals with disabilities, often leading to underemployment. The integration of workplace accommodations and adaptive technologies can significantly support their transition into both traditional work environments and hybrid employment models. Embracing innovative strategies for career development presents a unique opportunity to unlock the potential within this talented, yet often overlooked, pool of individuals. This approach includes offering flexible learning opportunities directly within workplaces, conducting thorough skills assessments, providing personalised coaching and career counselling and facilitating job shadowing experiences. For example, offering training programs that teach specific industry skills

and ensuring that online learning platforms are accessible to individuals with hearing or visual impairments can make a significant difference.

Additionally, employers can attract and retain people with disabilities by providing accessible workspaces, not just for those using wheelchairs, but also for individuals with other mobility challenges, sensory disabilities, or cognitive impairments. Examples include adjustable workstations, screen reader-compatible software and quiet spaces for those with sensory processing issues. By tailoring career pathways specifically for individuals with disabilities and ensuring accessibility in all aspects of the workplace, the region can attract and retain skilled workers while fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment.



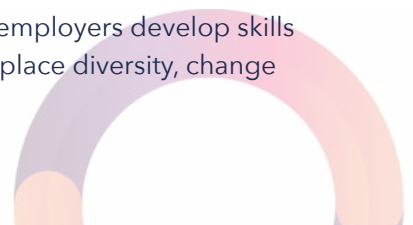
**Business
Chamber**
QUEENSLAND



Workforce
Evolve

Funded by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, Business Chamber Queensland offers free online courses through their Workforce Evolve Program. These courses are designed to equip small business owners with the tools and resources needed to access diverse groups of job seekers by adopting an inclusive approach to recruitment, retention and management within the workplace.

The program is delivered through six flexible online modules, helping employers develop skills in workforce planning, attracting the right candidates, supporting workplace diversity, change management and more.





Mature-age workers

Despite increasing life expectancy, mature-age workers often face distinct challenges when contemplating career transitions. Instead of seeking new job opportunities, they may be more inclined to leave the workforce entirely. To effectively retain this valuable demographic, employers must take proactive steps. Despite their wealth of experience, mature-age workers frequently encounter age-related biases in the workplace. Employers can counteract these biases by actively seeking out and valuing workers with diverse backgrounds and varied experiences, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

Additionally, accommodating the needs of mature-age workers requires flexibility in employment

arrangements. Many of these individuals may have health concerns or caregiving responsibilities that make long-term commitments challenging. Employers can address this by offering shorter-term employment options with increased flexibility, such as job-sharing arrangements. Embracing these flexible work arrangements not only meets the needs of mature-age workers but also creates opportunities for collaboration and knowledge transfer among employees from different generations. This approach not only supports the wellbeing and retention of mature-age workers but also enhances overall workplace diversity and productivity.



First Nations people

In Queensland, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community represents the nation's second-largest population, with more than 7.1 per cent residing in the Wide Bay region. Research conducted by JQ underscores the importance of understanding and addressing diverse factors, such as the remoteness of Indigenous communities, to provide tailored support. Challenges in workforce transitions for First Nations people include higher rates of chronic illness and cultural considerations that

influence approaches to wellbeing and community engagement. Collaborating closely with Indigenous representatives at national, state and local levels, the state government prioritises long-term social and economic advancement for Queensland's First Nations peoples. Initiatives like *Paving the Way - First Nations Training Strategy* focus on enhancing cultural competency within businesses, viewing it as an ongoing process encompassing awareness, proficiency and safety.



Culturally and linguistically diverse

Research findings highlight that individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds frequently encounter difficulties adjusting to changing skill requirements that prioritise advanced communication and social skills. Unlike those with culturally specific social competence and language proficiency, CALD individuals often face disadvantages in the labour

market. This situation presents an opportunity for the Wide Bay region to forge close partnerships with local training providers. Together, they can develop targeted campaigns aimed at directly promoting local employment opportunities to CALD graduates, thereby facilitating better workforce integration and addressing disparities within the region.

Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry

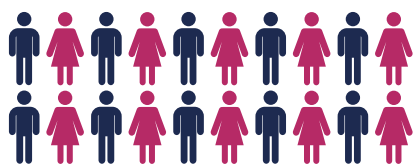
Food and beverage manufacturing employs approximately 2170 people in the Wide Bay region.¹² Of these, 1448 were employed full-time and 353 part-time. The top five occupations related to food and beverage manufacturing in the region are factory process workers (724), specialist managers (294), mobile plant operators (86), business, human resources and marketing professionals (69) and farm, forestry and garden workers (66).¹³

In the year to June 2022, manufacturing represented 27.7 per cent of the region's total exports.¹⁴

Employment in the food and beverage manufacturing industry is expected to grow 5 per cent (103 new jobs) to 2184 by 2026. Most of these employees (49.9 per cent) will be working within the meat and meat product manufacturing industry. Beverage manufacturing will have the largest increase of employees (20.8 per cent), while fruit and vegetable processing, seafood processing and oil and fat manufacturing are expected to decrease their numbers.¹⁵

Current workforce data

2170
persons



46
Median age



21.2%
Aged over 55 years



4.9%
Indigenous employment



22.6%
Employed born overseas



1.2%
Reported requiring assistance with core activities

Employment by subindustry



1094
Meat and meat product manufacturing



127
Fruit and vegetable processing



394
Beverage manufacturing



555
Other food product manufacturing

12. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/>

13. Ibid

14. Regional Development Australia. (2023). *RDA Wide Bay Burnett Region Economic Profile, 2023*. RDA: Wide Bay. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-wide-bay-burnett/gross-regional-product>

15. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/>

The region is well placed to benefit from the top three identified food and agribusiness opportunities for Queensland (health and wellness, traditional proteins and supply chain transformation).

Opportunities in health and wellness revolve around meeting the growing demand from health-conscious consumers who seek unprocessed, organic foods and those tailored to dietary intolerances (such as dairy, egg and gluten-free options) in both the Australian and global markets. The Wide Bay region presently sustains environmentally friendly agriculture, employing organic and microbial fertilisers, along with enhanced land management practices that contribute to the wellbeing of the ecosystem.

The promotion of conventional protein sources capitalises on the increasing trend in protein consumption, which has experienced a growth of over 40 per cent since 2000, with half the increase being driven by Asian markets.¹⁶ Presently, beef cattle contribute 28 per cent of the Wide Bay region's revenue, and it hosts 28 per cent of the state's pork production. Additionally, the region is home to the state's only export-accredited pork processing facility, located in Kingaroy.

Technologies that enhance the movement and tracking of food have the potential to transform supply chains. Queensland Agribusinesses and supply chain companies that adopt these innovative technologies are anticipated to experience increased productivity and reduced costs. The transformation of supply chains in the state's food and agribusiness industry is already in progress, led by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The region actively endeavours to reduce food loss and waste throughout supply chains while also moving towards sustainable packaging in the agrifood and beverage industry. Embracing advanced technology, including AI and precision tools, is crucial for improving farming productivity with the Bundaberg AgTech Hub playing a role in supporting AgTech initiatives and integration. Adopting technology to optimise logistics, preserve product freshness and enhance traceability not only guarantees streamlined supply chains but also enables quick responses to biosecurity and food safety challenges.

Food safety and leadership training in Bundaberg

In May 2024, the Food Industries Association of Queensland Inc. piloted two state government-funded and fully accredited short courses in Bundaberg.

These short courses, each consisting of three units, can be used as future credit towards the Certificate IV in Food Processing.

The pilot resulted in four referrals and one completion with all participants finding the courses to be valuable.



16. FIAL. (2019). *Protein market: Size of the protein analysis for Australia*. Australia: Food Innovation Australia. <https://www.fial.com.au/blogs/post/protein-market-size-of-the-prize-analysis-for-australia>

Megatrends

The Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry is undergoing significant transformation due to several global megatrends that will shape the future workforce and industry practices. These trends include advancements in care, computing, cognitive ability and communication, each carrying profound implications for the region's labour market dynamics and overall industry sustainability.



● Climate change

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues, posing risks such as extreme weather events and shifting agricultural conditions. These changes can disrupt supply chains and raw material availability, necessitating the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and resilient infrastructure. Manufacturers will need to increase energy efficiency and develop strategies to adapt to these climate-related disruptions to ensure continuity in production.

In addition, the industry is adapting to net zero targets that impact rural water use, catchment care, land management practices, fertiliser standards and equipment emissions to support and comply with regulation updates. Incorporating policy changes into business practices requires strategic management and ongoing business planning capabilities.

● Environmental and social governance

Environmental and social governance is another critical area influencing the industry. Consumers are increasingly demanding ethical and sustainable products, compelling manufacturers to prioritise principles. This shift requires manufacturers to adopt eco-friendly packaging, reduce waste and utilise renewable energy sources. Enhancing transparency in sourcing, production and labour practices will be essential for building consumer trust and complying with stringent environmental regulations and social standards. **Cognitive abilities**, including critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity, are emerging as essential competencies in the future labour market. As tasks become more complex and diverse, individuals with strong cognitive skills will excel, driving innovation and adaptation within organisations. In the context of the food and beverage manufacturing industry, fostering a workforce capable of innovative thinking and problem-solving is crucial for developing new products and improving existing processes to meet evolving consumer demands. **Effective communication skills**, both verbal and digital, are crucial in navigating the interconnected and rapidly evolving global marketplace. The ability to convey ideas, collaborate across diverse teams and leverage digital communication platforms has become indispensable in the modern workforce. For the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry, effective communication is key to engaging with global markets, understanding consumer preferences and fostering collaboration within the industry and with external partners.

● Transformative technology

Transformative technology is revolutionising the industry, with digital technologies like automation and AI enhancing efficiency, accuracy and scalability. Technologies such as dark warehousing are transforming logistics and supply chain operations, enabling 24/7 automated warehousing with minimal human intervention. To leverage these advancements, the industry must invest in digital infrastructure and training programs to develop skills in robotics, AI and data analytics, optimising production processes, reducing costs and improving product quality.

● Geopolitical impacts

Geopolitical impacts also play a significant role, as global political dynamics and trade policies affect market access, supply chain stability and regulatory compliance. Trade tensions and changing regulations can pose challenges in exporting products and sourcing materials. To navigate these complexities, the industry should diversify its markets and stay updated on international regulations. Forming strategic partnerships will be crucial for mitigating geopolitical risks and leveraging global market opportunities.

● Rising care economy

The **rising care economy**, driven by increasing consumer focus on health and wellness, is reshaping demand in the industry. Consumers are seeking products that promote health benefits, such as organic, non-genetically modified organism (non-GMO) and minimally processed foods. This shift underscores the need for the food and beverage manufacturing industry to consider the health and wellness trend, which drives consumer demand for healthier products. By 2025-2026, healthcare and social assistance will employ an additional 1408 people in the Wide Bay region, making up 23.5 per cent of the workforce. This highlights the growing importance of integrating health and wellness considerations into product offerings.¹⁷

By recognising and adapting to these megatrends, the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry can strategically anticipate and address the evolving needs and challenges of the labour market in the region. Through targeted investments in education, training and technological infrastructure, the industry can harness the opportunities presented by these megatrends to foster sustainable economic growth and workforce development. This proactive approach will ensure the industry's resilience and competitiveness in a dynamic and evolving global landscape.

17. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Anticipating Future Skills series 4*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/>

Regional training profile



Apprenticeships and traineeships are integral pathways into the manufacturing industry, playing a crucial role in bridging the gap between education and employment by providing employers with job-ready graduates. The vocational education and training (VET) system, therefore serves as a foundational element in workforce development, delivering tailored programs that address the specific skill requirements of the manufacturing industry. Recognised as an effective entry route into the industry, VET programs ensure that new entrants are equipped with the necessary qualifications to contribute effectively from the outset. In 2022, the region experienced an increase in enrolments and training activity across TAFE and other government and non-government training providers.

The training increase reflects both the growing demand for skilled workers and the effectiveness of targeted initiatives aimed at encouraging participation in VET programs. Notably, training packages in community services, construction, engineering and business saw the highest enrolment and completion rates, indicating a strong alignment between these fields and the regional economic needs. These areas are vital for not only the food and beverage manufacturing industry but also for supporting other industries that contribute to the overall economic fabric of the region.

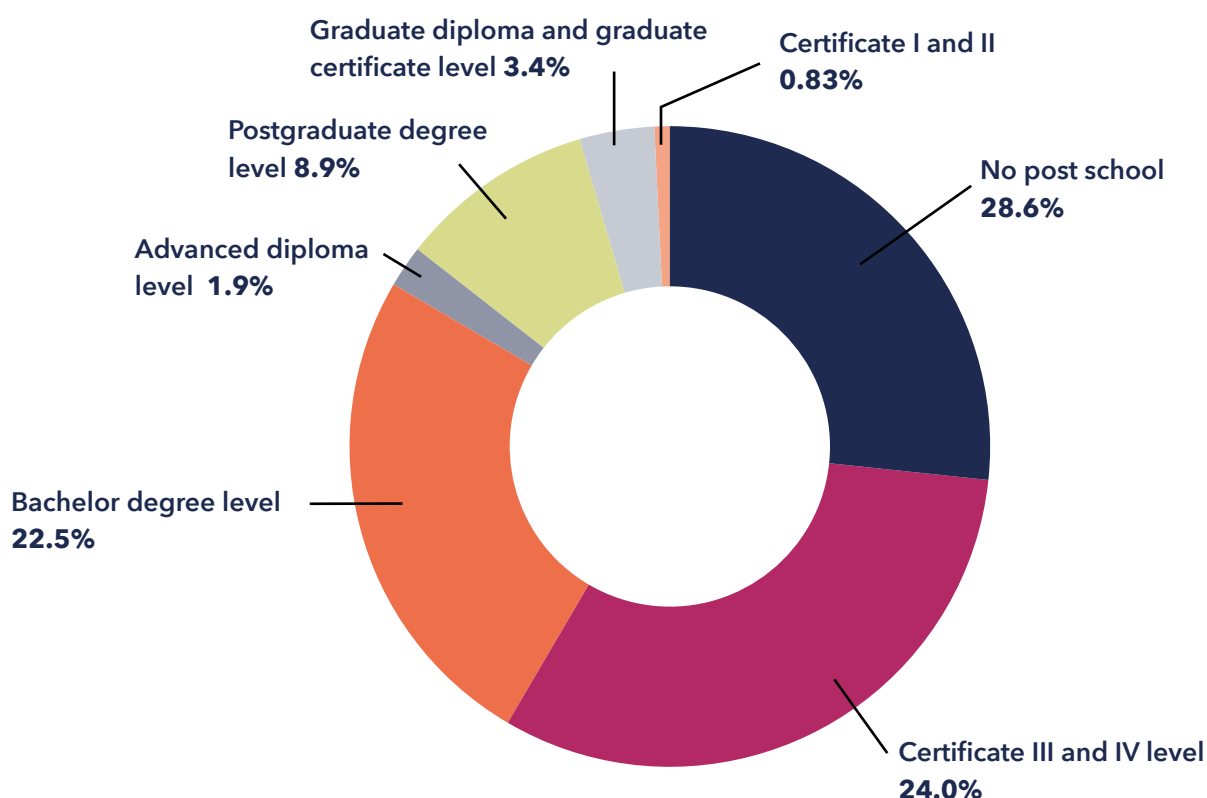
Over the five-year period ending in 2022, there has been a consistent and significant rise in the number

of trainees and apprentices entering the workforce. This trend is particularly pronounced in the post-COVID-19 period (2020-2021 financial year), where economic recovery efforts have underscored the importance of skilled labour. The pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities in global supply chains and accelerated the need for local manufacturing capabilities, further driving the demand for a skilled workforce. In response, regional educational providers and industry stakeholders have implemented targeted initiatives, such as accelerated apprenticeship programs, skills recognition for existing workers, and partnerships with industry to ensure training is aligned with current and future needs.

Looking ahead, sustained investment in VET and apprenticeship programs will be critical to maintaining the momentum in workforce development. Regional strategies are increasingly focusing on fostering closer collaboration between educational institutions, industry bodies, and government agencies to anticipate and respond to emerging skill needs. Initiatives like industry-led skills councils, regional jobs committees and building organisation level workforce planning capability of business leaders are playing a key role in ensuring that training programs remain relevant and that the local workforce is equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly evolving manufacturing landscape.



Figure 4 Food and beverage manufacturing qualifications in the Wide Bay region



Strong partnerships with educational institutions are key to ensuring future workers possess the necessary skills required to bridge skills gaps and develop a proficient workforce. Providing on-the-job training and practical vocational programs can heighten industry appeal and diversify the workforce.

Source: Jobs Queensland. (2024). Anticipating Future Skills Series, Data portal. Ipswich: Jobs Queensland. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/-portal/>



The *Good Jobs, Great Training: Queensland Skills Strategy 2024-2028* is a five-year plan designed to equip Queenslanders with the necessary skills to train, upskill and develop careers in key state industries.

It outlines a five-year initiative aimed at improving the state's training framework, making pathways to quality jobs accessible to everyone and emphasising the development of essential skills for both current and emerging sectors.

For industries to thrive, they must have a steady influx of skilled workers to fuel growth and spread economic benefits. Queensland plans to meet workforce demands by boosting labour market participation, helping unemployed and underemployed individuals to secure meaningful jobs, utilising skilled migration and offering training opportunities for both new entrants and existing workers.

However, vocational education alone will not provide workers with the skills and capabilities they require for a lifelong career. Over their working life, individuals will enter and exit work and education multiple times, having multiple careers across different industries. The commitment to lifelong learning allows individuals to consistently cultivate their skills and capabilities, whether through formal or informal education. This ongoing process equips them with both transferable and foundational skills, contributing significantly to their success throughout their entire professional journey. This commitment is further strengthened by strategies that promote continuous learning opportunities, supported by a positive organisational culture that encourages and values the pursuit of knowledge. Embracing a positive culture fosters an environment where

individuals are motivated to engage in lifelong learning, leading to not only personal growth but also contributing to the overall success and adaptability of the workforce.

Employers implementing strategies such as professional development programs, mentorship initiatives and flexible work arrangements can create an environment where employees continually acquire and apply new skills. Providing access to diverse learning resources, recognising achievements and encouraging participation in cross-functional projects further solidifies an organisational commitment to ongoing education. By embracing these initiatives, employers not only enhance individual capabilities but also cultivate a dynamic and adaptable workforce poised for long-term success.

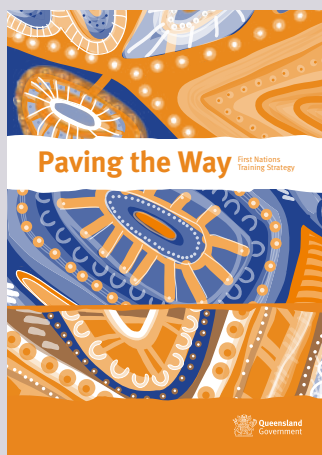
Lifelong learning is the foundation of future work. The skills and capabilities of our workforce can underpin and differentiate Queensland's economy in future years. However, skills and capabilities must be continually developed over a working life.¹⁸

Fermentation for the food and beverage industry micro-credential

CQUniversity is piloting a fermentation micro-credential designed to assist in upskilling the current and future workforce and to increase innovation in future food production. The micro-credential pilot is fully funded by the federal government and will cover topics such as basic microbiology, principles of fermentation, food safety, troubleshooting, practical lab skills, fermentation for human health and new product development.



18. Jobs Queensland. (2021). *Lifelong learning. The foundation of future work*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/lifelong-learning-report.pdf>



Paving the Way

The *Paving the Way - First Nations Training Strategy* represents the Queensland Government's commitment to supporting Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in accessing training and skilling opportunities that lead to sustainable jobs. At its core is a culturally sensitive and community-centred approach that acknowledges the unique needs, aspirations and challenges of First Nations communities.

Central to the strategy is genuine cultural respect and understanding, which requires engaging in meaningful dialogue with First Nations community members to identify their specific needs and preferences regarding education, training and employment. Through community consultation and collaboration, advisory committees or working groups composed of First Nations representatives can be established to ensure that their voices are heard and their perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes.

The strategy prioritises the development of culturally appropriate services tailored to the needs of First Nations individuals and communities. This includes incorporating Indigenous perspectives, languages and teaching methodologies into training curricula and providing access to Indigenous mentors or Elders for guidance and support.

Partnerships with local First Nations organisations, Indigenous-owned businesses and community leaders are crucial for building trust, fostering collaboration and enhancing capacity within First Nations communities. By respecting engagement protocols and acknowledging Indigenous knowledge and skills as valuable assets, the strategy seeks to create opportunities for First Nations individuals to share their expertise and contribute to training and employment outcomes.

Ultimately, the *Paving the Way - First Nations Training Strategy* aims to foster long-term, reciprocal relationships with First Nations communities based on trust, respect and mutual benefit. By embracing these principles and practices, the strategy can effectively engage First Nations communities, empower Indigenous individuals to pursue education and training opportunities aligned with their cultural values and aspirations and pave the way for brighter futures across Queensland.

Gateway to Industry Schools program

The Gateway to Industry Schools program (GISP) is a significant industry engagement initiative led by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. Aligned with the vision to equip all Queenslanders with skills and opportunities for economic participation and prosperity, GISP fosters partnerships between schools and industries. It aims to empower young individuals with the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for effective participation in the Queensland economy.

The program offers diverse learning experiences to students, facilitating informed career choices and pathways to employment. Under the GISP umbrella, industry organisations lead projects tailored to school engagement activities aligned with industry-specific skills and workforce priorities. These projects operate in collaboration with participating schools to provide a range of opportunities, including work experience, apprenticeships and pathways to university.

In the Wide Bay region, there are two relevant GISP initiatives: Advanced Manufacturing and Agribusiness. These programs offer valuable opportunities for the local food and beverage manufacturing industry to engage with schools and cultivate a skilled workforce tailored to industry needs. With a focus on Advanced Manufacturing, the GISP project provides avenues for industry professionals to collaborate with schools in Bundaberg and Maryborough, offering insights into modern manufacturing practices, including robotics, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education and coding. Simultaneously, the Agribusiness program spans various schools in the region, emphasising partnerships between education and agriculture-related industries to promote career pathways in food production. The Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry can leverage these programs by actively participating in school engagement activities, providing mentorship opportunities, offering work experience placements and sharing industry expertise. By aligning with these GISP initiatives, the industry can play a vital role in shaping the future workforce, fostering talent development and sustaining growth.



Gateway to Industry Schools - Advanced Manufacturing

This project, guided by the Queensland Reference Group (QRG), involves key partners from government, non-government school sectors, and various industries, including Advanced Manufacturing, Industry 4.0, Defence and Aerospace. It addresses the challenge of attracting young people to the advanced manufacturing and engineering industries by raising awareness of career opportunities, providing professional development for teachers and implementing activities aligned with STEAM education.

The project aims to create pathways for students into apprenticeships, traineeships and university programs while also celebrating and sharing student, teacher and industry successes.



Gateway to Industry Schools - Agribusiness

This project involves multiple schools across regions such as Kingaroy, Gympie, Gayndah, Maryborough, Childers and Bundaberg. It focuses on facilitating the transition of students into further education or employment in agriculture-related industries by developing curriculum resources, partnering with local industry for experiential learning opportunities and promoting school-based apprenticeships. Additionally, the project provides professional development for teachers, supports quality VET programs and encourages participation in pilot projects aimed at sparking interest in agricultural careers.

These initiatives demonstrate GISP's commitment to preparing young Queenslanders for success in key industries while fostering collaboration between education and industry stakeholders.

School to Work Transitions program

The School to Work Transitions program is designed to facilitate smooth transitions for students from school to the workforce. By offering targeted support and resources, this program equips young individuals with the skills, knowledge and experiences necessary to succeed in their chosen career paths. From career guidance and exploration to practical training opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships and mentorship programs, the School to Work Transitions program aims to bridge the gap between education and employment.

This initiative plays a crucial role in addressing current and future labour market demands by aligning education and training pathways with industry needs. By actively engaging with employers, industry associations and educational institutions, the program can identify emerging skill requirements and tailor its offerings to meet those demands. Additionally, by providing students with exposure to various industries and career pathways, the program helps to diversify the talent pool and cultivate a skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and innovation. Through strategic collaboration and targeted interventions, the School to Work Transitions program serves as a valuable tool for workforce planning, ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills and experiences needed to thrive in the workforce of tomorrow.



Building the business ecosystem

Enhancing business skills and capability development encompassing leadership and management play a crucial role in bolstering resilience, sustainability and growth potential within the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry. Each small business within this diverse industry has unique needs based on size, objectives and growth aspirations. Whether aiming to expand operations, consolidate resources, relocate facilities or diversify product lines, strategic planning tailored to individual ambitions is essential for fostering success and adaptability. Recognising and addressing these varied goals ensures that all business objectives are equally valued and effectively supported.

Enhancing business skills and capability development, particularly in leadership and management, is vital for fostering resilience, sustainability and growth within the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry. Achieving this requires a tailored approach that addresses the diverse needs and ambitions of individual businesses across the industries.

A strategic focus on tailored training and development programs is essential. This begins with thorough assessments to pinpoint specific skills gaps and development areas within each organisation. Customised initiatives can then be implemented to enhance leadership capabilities, managerial skills and industry-specific knowledge. Emphasising continuous learning ensures that employees stay current with industry trends and best practices.

Leadership and management empowerment are equally crucial. Investing in leadership programs cultivates effective decision-making, strategic planning and team management skills among executives and middle managers. Concurrently, providing managerial training equips supervisors and team leaders with the abilities needed to optimise operations, motivate teams and drive productivity. Mentorship programs further support this growth by nurturing emerging leaders within the organisation.

Strategic planning and goal alignment play pivotal roles in this development process. Businesses collaborate to establish clear, achievable goals aligned with specific objectives—whether growth, consolidation, relocation or diversification. Efficient resource allocation supports these goals, ensuring adequate funding, technology and human resources are available. Regular monitoring of progress facilitates adjustments to strategies, fostering adaptability in response to market dynamics and industry shifts.

Embracing innovation and adaptation is essential. Cultivating an innovation culture encourages employees to propose and implement new ideas that enhance processes, products and market positioning. Equipping the workforce with adaptive management skills enables effective responses to changing market conditions and technological advancements. Integrating technological advancements such as automation and data analytics enhances operational efficiency, product quality and customer engagement.

Collaboration and partnerships further strengthen the industry's capabilities. Collaborating with industry peers, research institutions and government bodies facilitates knowledge sharing and resource access. Building strong relationships with suppliers and customers fosters trust and mutual value creation. **Strategic partnerships that complement core competencies expand market reach and drive innovation in product development and distribution channels.**

Opportunities and challenges

Australia possesses distinct strengths and areas of advantage for food and beverage manufacturing, which include:

- a reputation for food and beverage products that are green, safe and clean
- recognition as a trusted supplier with strong trade relations and connections through close proximity to emerging markets
- access to high-quality and reliable agricultural produce
- Australia's trusted regulatory system.¹⁹

However, to sustain and advance the food and beverage manufacturing industry, it is imperative to invest in promoting the region and establishing educational pathways that attract and retain a skilled workforce. Beyond industry development strategies, there is a critical need to invest in human capital development.

The Wide Bay region currently faces significant labour challenges exacerbated by global workforce shortages resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, demographic shifts such as an ageing population and specialised skills gaps not adequately addressed by local training facilities further complicate the situation. The food and beverage manufacturing industry must adopt forward-thinking strategies to address these challenges and stimulate growth.

Key initiatives include mentoring and upskilling current workers in emerging technologies, thereby preparing them for the demands of a modern

industry landscape. Promoting lifelong learning opportunities will be essential to continuously develop the workforce to higher skill levels required for implementing and operating new technologies. Facilitating greater industry collaboration and coordination is crucial to overcoming barriers such as inconsistent availability of data and connectivity, which hinder efficiency and innovation.

Moreover, addressing integration gaps within industry and global supply chains is essential for fostering collaboration and information sharing. By improving collaboration and reducing integration gaps, the industry can enhance productivity and competitiveness. Additionally, tackling underutilisation and the cost of domestic inputs through strategic partnerships and innovative practices will be vital to ensuring sustainable growth and profitability.

The industry must innovate to meet best practice standards to thrive as a modern food and beverage manufacturing hub. This includes adopting and adapting to smart and emerging technologies that streamline processes and improve efficiency.²⁰ By embracing these strategies and initiatives, the Wide Bay region can position itself as a leader in the evolving landscape of food and beverage manufacturing in Australia, attracting skilled talent and fostering a resilient and prosperous industry ecosystem.

19. Department of Industry, Science and Resources. (2021). *Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority road map*. Canberra: Australian Government. [16 Aug 2022 - Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority road map | Department of Industry, Science and Resources - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

20. Department of Industry, Science and Resources. (2021). *Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority roadmap*. Australian Government: Canberra. [16 Aug 2022 - Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority road map | Department of Industry, Science and Resources - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry workforce plan strategies

Priority: Workforce attraction and retention



Goal: Focusing on attracting skilled talent to the industry while fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment to enhance retention and ensure long-term growth and sustainability.

Strategy: Skilled talent attraction

HIGH PRIORITY

- Develop targeted recruitment campaigns to attract skilled talent to the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay region.
- Leveraging online job boards, industry-specific platforms and social media channels to reach potential candidates.
- Industry pre-employment entry programs developed locally in collaboration with partners such as the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, training providers or employment services providers.

MED PRIORITY

- Collaborate with local educational institutions and vocational training centres to promote career opportunities in the food and beverage manufacturing industry and attract graduates with relevant skills and qualifications.
- Developing competency pool to design flexible training to suit industry and business needs.
- Deliver the skills training needed by industry.
- Participate in industry guest-speaking opportunities.
- Link with local Regional School Industry Partnership (RSIP) program (Queensland Department of Education) to strengthen school and industry partnerships.

LOW PRIORITY

- Showcase career opportunities available in the industry.
- Participate in job expos, industry events, open days or tours and networking opportunities to engage with potential candidates.
- Link with local RSIP program (Queensland Department of Education) to strengthen school and industry partnerships.

Strategy: Inclusive and supportive work environment

HIGH PRIORITY

- Foster a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion within the food and beverage manufacturing industry by promoting equal opportunities for all employees regardless of background, gender, disability or ethnicity.
- Evaluate the feasibility of facility upgrades to support people identified with a disability to enter the industry.
- Implement policies and practices that support work-life balance, including flexible work options, telecommuting opportunities and family-friendly policies.
- Provide resources and support for employee wellbeing, including mental health programs, wellness initiatives and access to counselling services.
- Conduct regular cultural safety audits of workplace policies, practices and environments to identify and address any barriers or biases that may impact First Nations employees.

Strategy: Retention and employee engagement

HIGH PRIORITY

- Implement strategies to enhance employee retention and engagement within the food and beverage manufacturing industry. This could include offering competitive compensation and benefits packages, opportunities for career advancement, and recognition programs to reward employee contributions.
- Complete a salary benchmarking activity and provide a tool to use as a reference for recruitment.
- Evaluate the feasibility of employee recognition programs or components of programs identified to suit employee needs.
- Implement targeted recruitment and retention strategies to attract and retain First Nations employees, such as developing partnerships with First Nations communities, organisations and education providers.

LOW PRIORITY

- Provide ongoing training and development opportunities to support employee growth and skill development.
- Establish regular communication channels to gather feedback from employees, address concerns and recognise achievements. Encourage open dialogue and transparency to foster a sense of belonging and ownership among employees.
- Mentorship programs, leadership training and access to industry certifications.

Strategy: Long-term growth and sustainability

MED PRIORITY

- Align workforce planning efforts with long-term business goals and objectives to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay region.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate workforce trends, industry developments and demographic shifts to adapt workforce strategies accordingly and stay ahead of market changes.
- Inform local small-to-medium enterprises of the benefits of accessing existing workforce planning and business planning tools and resources.
- Foster collaboration and partnerships with industry stakeholders, government agencies and community organisations to address common challenges, advocate for industry interests and drive collective growth and innovation.

Strategy: Workforce planning for industry and business

HIGH PRIORITY

- Create and implement programs tailored to develop the skills and capabilities required by the industry, in partnership with training providers and educational institutions.
- Collaborate with local and industry providers (such as Bundaberg Regional Jobs Committee and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network) to leverage existing programs.

MED PRIORITY

- Utilise technology and data analytics to manage workforce planning, including tracking employee performance, predicting future workforce needs and optimising workforce deployment.
- Organise industry-specific training sessions and workshops to keep the workforce updated with the latest trends, technologies and best practices in the food and beverage manufacturing industry.

LOW PRIORITY

- Regularly assess the current and future workforce needs of the food and beverage manufacturing industry to identify skill gaps and areas for improvement.
- Promote a culture of continuous learning and development within the industry to ensure employees remain adaptable and proficient in their roles.

Outcomes:

Through targeted recruitment campaigns, partnerships with educational institutions and active participation in industry events, the applicant pool will be expanded, and a steady pipeline of skilled graduates will be cultivated, which will enhance talent attraction and retention, driving long-term growth and sustainability.

Fostering a diverse, inclusive and supportive work environment will enhance employee satisfaction and wellbeing, leading to higher retention rates and fostering a more innovative workforce. Competitive compensation packages, ongoing training and development opportunities, and improved communication channels will further elevate employee engagement and loyalty.

Aligning workforce planning with long-term business goals and continuously monitoring industry trends will ensure adaptability and resilience in a dynamic market. Collaborative efforts with industry stakeholders, government agencies and community organisations will address common challenges, driving collective growth and innovation.

Conducting regular workforce needs assessments, developing tailored workforce development programs, implementing workforce management systems, facilitating industry-specific training and encouraging lifelong learning will ensure the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay region remains competitive and sustainable in the long term.

Priority: Skills and training



Goal: Enhance training and skills development in the food and beverage manufacturing industry through comprehensive training programs, hands-on experience, industry locally-based university collaboration, technology integration, and continuous improvement initiatives.

Strategy: Comprehensive training programs



- Develop and implement training programs that are customised to the specific needs and requirements of the food and beverage manufacturing industry. These programs should cover essential skills such as food safety, quality assurance, production techniques and equipment operation.
- Tailor training content and delivery methods to accommodate different learning styles, skill levels and job roles within the industry.



- Utilise a variety of training methods, including hands-on workshops, online courses and on-the-job training, to accommodate different learning styles and preferences.
- Incorporate real-life scenarios, case studies and industry-specific examples into training materials to make them relevant and engaging for participants.



- Provide opportunities for employees to obtain industry-recognised certifications and credentials to validate their skills and expertise.

Strategy: Industry training collaboration



- Establish strategic partnerships with locally based universities and other local educational institutions to create specialised training programs and curricula tailored to the needs of the food and beverage manufacturing industry.
- Collaborate on research projects and initiatives that address industry challenges and explore opportunities for innovation and advancement.
- Offer traineeships and apprenticeships to students to provide hands-on experience and exposure to real-world industry practices.
- Collaborate with local and industry providers (such as regional jobs committees and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network) to facilitate partnerships.

Strategy: Hands-on experience



- Provide opportunities for hands-on experience and practical application of skills within the food and beverage manufacturing environment. This could include on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs and simulation exercises.
- Create training facilities or designated areas within manufacturing facilities where employees can practice and refine their skills in a controlled environment.
- Pair new employees with experienced mentors or supervisors who can provide guidance, feedback and support as they develop their skills.

Strategy: Technology integration



- Invest in the integration of technology and digital solutions to enhance skills development and training effectiveness within the food and beverage manufacturing industry.
- Utilise data analytics and machine learning algorithms to personalise training programs and identify areas for skill improvement based on individual performance and feedback.
- Leverage digital technologies and online platforms to enhance training delivery and accessibility within the food and beverage manufacturing industry.
- Implement simulation software, virtual reality (VR) training modules and other advanced technologies to provide immersive and interactive learning experiences.
- Implement e-learning modules, interactive tutorials and virtual training sessions to provide flexible and self-paced learning opportunities for employees.

Strategy: Continuous improvement initiatives



- Establish a culture of continuous improvement within the food and beverage manufacturing industry by encouraging employees to actively participate in skill enhancement and professional development.
- Implement feedback mechanisms and performance evaluation processes to monitor skill development progress and identify areas for further improvement.
- Regularly review and update internal training programs to ensure alignment with industry best practices, emerging trends and technological advancements.

Outcomes:

Tailored training programs that incorporate diverse methods, industry-recognised certifications and real-life scenarios will equip employees with essential skills and knowledge, improving job performance and knowledge retention. Strategic partnerships with locally based universities will facilitate specialised curricula, collaborative research and valuable hands-on experience through traineeships and apprenticeships.

Investment in technology integration, including immersive learning experiences and personalised training programs using advanced tools like simulation software, VR modules, e-learning, gamification and augmented reality, will provide flexible and engaging training opportunities. Establishing a culture of continuous improvement, supported by effective feedback and evaluation mechanisms, as well as fostering ongoing professional development through workshops, industry participation, and career development resources, will ensure employees remain current, skilled, motivated and aligned with industry best practices and emerging trends.

Priority: Build business capability



Goal: Advance business capability in Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturing industry by optimising operations, fostering innovation, expanding market reach, strengthening supply chain resilience, enhancing product quality, fostering collaboration, developing talent and ensuring financial sustainability.

Strategy: Optimise operations



- Conduct a thorough assessment of current operations to identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks and areas for improvement.
- Implement lean manufacturing principles and continuous improvement methodologies to streamline processes, reduce waste and enhance productivity.
- Invest in technology and automation solutions to automate repetitive tasks, improve operational efficiency and optimise resource utilisation.

Strategy: Foster innovation



- Create a culture of innovation within the food and beverage manufacturing industry by encouraging employees to think creatively and explore new ideas.
- Establish a dedicated innovation team or department responsible for researching emerging trends, technologies and consumer preferences.
- Allocate resources and funding for research and development initiatives aimed at developing new products, processes and technologies.
- Implement regular innovation workshops and networking opportunities that involve employees at all levels, encouraging them to contribute ideas and collaborate on potential opportunities to innovate.

Strategy: Expand market reach



- Identify new market opportunities and target segments for food and beverage products manufactured in Wide Bay.
- Develop strategic marketing campaigns and distribution channels to reach target customers and expand market presence.
- Explore export and international expansion opportunities to diversify revenue streams and reduce dependency on local markets.

Strategy: Strengthen supply chain resilience



- Assess the supply chain's resilience and identify potential risks and vulnerabilities.
- Diversify sourcing strategies, establish alternative suppliers and implement contingency plans to mitigate supply chain disruptions.
- Collaborate with suppliers and partners to improve visibility, transparency and communication throughout the supply chain.

Strategy: Enhance product quality



- Implement quality management systems and standards to ensure consistent product quality and safety.
- Invest in technology and equipment upgrades to improve manufacturing processes and enhance product consistency and reliability.
- Conduct regular quality audits and inspections to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements and industry standards.

Strategy: Foster collaboration



- Establish partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders in the food and beverage ecosystem, including suppliers, distributors, retailers and industry associations.
- Participate in industry forums, conferences and working groups to exchange ideas, address common challenges and advocate for industry interests.
- Share best practices, resources and knowledge to drive collective innovation, efficiency and growth within the industry.

Strategy: Develop talent



- Invest in talent development initiatives to attract, retain and sustain skilled professionals within the food and beverage manufacturing industry.
- Offer training, mentorship and career advancement opportunities to empower employees and support their professional growth.
- Collaborate with educational institutions to develop industry-relevant curriculum and training programs that align with workforce needs and industry standards.

Strategy: Ensure financial sustainability



- Implement financial management practices and strategies to optimise profitability, manage costs and ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Conduct regular financial analyses and forecasts to monitor performance, identify potential risks and make informed business decisions.
- Explore opportunities for funding, grants and incentives to support business growth, innovation and sustainability initiatives.

Outcomes:

Increasing business capability in Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturing industry will not only enhance operational efficiency but also drive innovation and expand market reach. By optimising operations through lean manufacturing and automation, waste can be reduced and productivity increased. Investing in research and development and fostering a culture of innovation will spur the development of new products and technologies. Furthermore, expanding market reach through strategic marketing and exploring export opportunities will diversify revenue streams, ensuring financial stability.

To bolster operational resilience, the supply chain can be strengthened with diversified sourcing strategies and improved collaboration. Enhancing product quality through robust quality management systems and technological upgrades will meet regulatory standards and enhance reliability. Collaboration with industry stakeholders will drive collective growth and innovation.

Simultaneously, developing talent through targeted training, mentorship and educational collaborations will build a skilled and motivated workforce. Ensuring financial sustainability through sound financial management practices, regular analysis and leveraging funding opportunities will support continued growth and innovation.

Appendix 1

The Project Champion Group highlighted the classifications listed below as directly impacting Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturing industry.

Industry code and name	ANZSIC group	Includes primary activities (but not limited to)
C Manufacturing	1111 Meat Product Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abattoir operation (except poultry) • Animal meat packing and freezing • Animal oil or fat, unrefined, manufacturing • Lard or tallow rendering • Meat extract or essence manufacturing • Meat manufacturing (except bacon, ham and poultry) • Meat or bone meal manufacturing (except fish or poultry meal) • Meat packing (except poultry) • Meat, canned, manufacturing (except poultry, bacon, ham and corned meat) • Meat, dehydrated, manufacturing (except poultry) • Meat, frozen, manufacturing (except poultry)
C Manufacturing	1112 Poultry Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game bird (e.g. pheasant, quail) slaughtering • Frozen poultry manufacturing • Poultry abattoir operation • Poultry croquette manufacturing • Poultry meat or bone meal manufacturing • Poultry meat packing • Poultry meat processing (including canning)
C Manufacturing	1113 Cured Meat and Smallgoods Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacon manufacturing • Corned meat manufacturing (including canned) • Croquette manufacturing n.e.c. (not elsewhere classified) • Ham, canned, manufacturing • Meat speciality manufacturing • Pate manufacturing (except fish) • Poultry smallgoods manufacturing • Smallgoods manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1120 Seafood Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crustacean, processed, manufacturing (including cooked and/or frozen) n.e.c. • Fish cleaning or filleting • Fish fillet manufacturing • Fish loaf or cake manufacturing • Fish paste manufacturing • Fish pate manufacturing • Fish, canned, manufacturing • Fish, dried or smoked, manufacturing • Mollusc, processed, manufacturing (including shelled) • Oyster, shelling, freezing or bottling in brine • Scallop, preserved, manufacturing • Seafood, canned, manufacturing • Seafood, preserved, manufacturing • Whole fin fish freezing

Industry code and name	ANZSIC group	Includes primary activities (but not limited to)
C Manufacturing	1140 Fruit and Vegetable Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby food, canned or bottled, manufacturing (except milk-based) • Baked bean manufacturing • Bean/legume, dried or canned, manufacturing • Chutney or relish manufacturing • Coconut, desiccated, manufacturing • Fruit dehydrating or drying (except sun drying) manufacturing • Fruit juice, 100 per cent pure or concentrated, manufacturing • Fruit pulp, puree or spread manufacturing • Fruit salad manufacturing • Fruit, frozen, manufacturing • Fruit, preserved, manufacturing (including canned or bottled) • Grape crushing • Jam manufacturing (including preserves, jellies or fruit spreads) • Mixed meat and vegetable manufacturing • Rice preparation, canned, manufacturing • Sauce manufacturing (except Worcestershire sauce) • Spaghetti, canned, manufacturing • Vegetable juice or soup manufacturing • Vegetable salad manufacturing • Vegetable soup manufacturing • Vegetable, frozen, manufacturing • Vegetable, preserved, manufacturing (including canned, dehydrated, dried or quick frozen) • Vinegar manufacturing (except wine vinegar)
C Manufacturing	1150 Oil and Fat Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal oil, refined, manufacturing • Cotton seed oil manufacturing • Deodorised vegetable oil manufacturing • Edible oil or fat, blended, manufacturing • Fish or other marine animal oil or meal manufacturing • Lard, refined, manufacturing • Margarine manufacturing • Olive oil manufacturing • Tallow, refined, manufacturing • Vegetable oil, meal or cake manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1191 Potato, Corn and Other Crisp Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn chip manufacturing • Crisp manufacturing • Potato crisp manufacturing • Taco, tortilla or tostada shell manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1192 Prepared Animal and Bird Feeding Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal feed, prepared, manufacturing (except uncanned meat or bone meal or protein-enriched skim milk powder) • Animal food, canned, manufacturing • Bird feed manufacturing • Cattle lick manufacturing • Cereal meal manufacturing (for fodder, except from rice or rye) • Chaff manufacturing • Crushed grain manufacturing (including mixed; for fodder) • Dehydrated lucerne manufacturing • Dog and cat biscuit manufacturing • Fodder, prepared, manufacturing • Grain offal manufacturing (for fodder; except from rice or rye) • Lucerne cube manufacturing • Lucerne meal manufacturing • Pet food, canned, manufacturing • Poultry feed, prepared, manufacturing • Sheep lick manufacturing

Industry code and name	ANZSIC group	Includes primary activities (but not limited to)
C Manufacturing	1199 Other Food Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee manufacturing • Colouring, food, manufacturing • Dessert mix, liquid, manufacturing • Egg pulping or drying • Flavoured water pack manufacturing (for freezing into flavoured ice) • Food dressing manufacturing • Food flavouring manufacturing • Food manufacturing n.e.c. • Gelatine manufacturing • Ginger product manufacturing (except confectionery) • Health supplement manufacturing • Herb, processed, manufacturing • Honey, blended, manufacturing • Hop extract, concentrated, manufacturing • Jelly crystal manufacturing • Pre-prepared meal, frozen, manufacturing • Rice preparation manufacturing n.e.c. • Salt, cooking or table, manufacturing • Savoury speciality manufacturing • Seasoning, food, manufacturing • Soya bean concentrate, isolate or textured protein manufacturing • Spice manufacturing • Tea blending • Tea manufacturing • Worcestershire sauce manufacturing • Yeast or yeast extract manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1211 Soft Drink, Cordial and Syrup Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbonated water or cordial manufacturing • Cider, non-alcoholic, manufacturing • Cordial manufacturing • Energy drink manufacturing • Fruit drink, less than 100 per cent pure juice, manufacturing • Ginger beer, non-alcoholic, manufacturing • Ice manufacturing (except dry ice) • Mineral water manufacturing • Powder flavour manufacturing (for soft drinks) • Purified water manufacturing • Soda water manufacturing • Soft drink manufacturing • Syrup, chocolate, caramel or vanilla, manufacturing • Syrup, fruit, manufacturing • Tonic water manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1212 Beer Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beer manufacturing (except non-alcoholic beer)
C Manufacturing	1213 Spirit Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandy manufacturing • Fortified spirit manufacturing • Liqueur manufacturing • Spirit-based mixed drink manufacturing • Potable spirit manufacturing
C Manufacturing	1214 Wine and Other Alcoholic Beverage Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beverage n.e.c., alcoholic, manufacturing • Carbonated wine manufacturing • Cider, alcoholic, manufacturing • Fortified wine manufacturing • Mead manufacturing • Perry, alcoholic, manufacturing • Sherry manufacturing • Sparkling wine manufacturing • Wine-based fruit drink 'cooler' manufacturing • Wine manufacturing • Wine vinegar manufacturing • Unfortified wine manufacturing

Acknowledgment

Project Champion Group

Jobs Queensland in partnership with Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers (BFVG) would like to acknowledge the support of the Project Champion Group (PCG). The PCG was established to support the delivery of this industry-led workforce plan as a blueprint for the industry to address workforce challenges into the future.

The primary objective of the PCG was to provide JQ with advice to help guide the project and provide industry endorsement of project deliverables to best meet industry's needs and expectations. BFVG provided JQ with access to their networks, so consultation was maximised.

The PCG comprised of representatives of:

- Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Limited
- Marquis Macadamias
- Farm Fresh Fine Foods
- Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.

The PCG identified and endorsed the region of focus as the Wide Bay Statistical Area 4 (SA4) and developed appendix 1 as a reflection of the local industry.

We thank them for their time and industry expertise.





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