

<b>Agricultural Technical Officer</b>		<b>Australia</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 3112-17	December 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	No shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

Agricultural technical officers examine the characteristics of farm produce, livestock and farm land. They also advise and support agricultural scientists (Australian Standard Classification of Occupations). This occupation includes a range of specialisations requiring diverse technical qualifications and experience in areas such as artificial insemination, dairy farming, field crops, herd testing, horticulture and poultry.

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for agricultural technical officers was undertaken for this report and a number of employers were cold canvassed as there were insufficient advertisements identified in the survey period. Employers surveyed included state public service departments, agricultural research organisations and businesses.

Employers had varying expectations on the qualifications required to fill their agricultural technical officer positions. For some employers, year 10 graduates were considered as sufficiently qualified, while others were seeking candidates with a diploma, a degree or several years' relevant experience, depending on the required skill level for the position. Employers also observed that they utilised various employment arrangements for this occupation, with several part-time and casual positions on offer, particularly for year 10 graduates involved in sample collection and lab assistance. These responses demonstrate the variety of tasks involved in this occupation as well as the diversity in interpretation of the role by employers.

Most employers had multiple suitable applicants for their advertised positions and were satisfied with the quality of their applicants, although some employers commented that their response rate was not as high as they expected.

However, industry sources suggested that some specialisations were particularly difficult to fill compared with more general agricultural technical officer role. For example, employers had trouble hiring artificial insemination technical officers and they noted that this was due to the seasonal nature of the work (mainly 3-month contracts). Poultry technical officer positions were also more difficult to recruit due to reasons of societal perception of the role. Some employers also noted that very remote positions attracted a lower number of suitable applicants compared with those in larger townships.

Nonetheless, employers were generally satisfied with the number and quality of applications and were able to fill their agricultural technical officer vacancies relatively easily.

### **Labour market outlook**

As a diverse occupation covering multiple specialisations, there is little evidence to suggest that there will be a significant change in the supply or demand for agricultural technical officers over the next six months. However, significant rainfall in drought affected areas is likely to boost demand in those locations.