

Primary Products Inspector		Western Australia
ASCO Code: 3991-11		March 2008
Labour market rating:	No shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

In WA, most primary products inspectors work for the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food in a division known as Quarantine WA that provides plant, fruit and vegetable health certification. Inspectors provide documentation for produce leaving WA as well as quarantine services for product entering the State. The Department of Agriculture and Food also employs bio-security officers to manage and cull intruding species that become a threat to crops. Employment demand is in part driven by threats of agricultural pests and infestations. At the federal level, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service provides inspection, verification and certification services to the export meat, dairy, fish, grain and horticulture industries in Australia. It also provides foreign border protection by employing agricultural product inspectors at Australian entry points. Positions are advertised fairly regularly by the two public service bodies.

Occupational supply

To fill the role of primary products inspector a person must have demonstrated experience or qualifications in agriculture, horticulture or bio-security as well as experience in application of regulations or applying legislation or formal dealing with regulatory organisations. These skills need to be in combination. Qualifications may be at the levels of degree, horticultural tradesperson, diploma, or TAFE level certificates. Applicants also need to display computer literacy and be comfortable with the application of technology in the workplace. Because employment is predominantly by the government sector, Australian citizenship and police clearance may be requirements of employment.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for primary products inspectors showed 100 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising. There were 10 applicants per vacancy of whom about 2 per vacancy were considered by employers to be suitable. Unsuitable applicants were seen to lack the qualifications and experience requirements. Both the State and Federal Departments report that staff need to wear a uniform at work, represent government as an Officer, be prepared to issue documentation and enforce and apply aspects of the relevant laws. Many of the inspection positions are at the Perth Airport and at Perth's major fruit and vegetable wholesale distribution markets. One major employer reported that each time they advertise they can expect around 100 applications. The timing of this recruitment depends upon the seasonal peaks, such as grain harvest times. Work is often contract based and for limited periods at various shipping ports as well as offshore territories. It was also reported that the primary products inspectors may also be responsible for native plant and animal protection and environmental protection from introduced disease, weeds and foreign animals and therefore staff are required to live in country towns, rural and sometimes remote locations. Local people with inspection and surveillance skills are often recruited for these roles.

Labour market outlook

Due to ongoing threats from agricultural pests and disease as well as the requirement for a range of certifications of products, regular recruitment for positions in both the State and Federal government agencies can be expected to continue at the current rate.