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**EXPLORE AGRICULTURAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR DISABLED PERSONS**


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**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Federal Government explore with the Provinces and farm organizations, ways to increase the employment opportunities for disabled persons in the agricultural sector.

## COMMITTED

**Labour Pools:** The Minister of Employment and Immigration told the Committee in April of 1981 that he had asked his officials to examine how farm labour pools can recruit persons with handicaps. His department then took this issue to the 1981-82 Federal-Provincial Agricultural Development Conference where this subject was one of the major discussion points. From this conference came a message that this was an important area to explore for the ongoing Federal-Provincial Agricultural Development Committees.

**Seasonal Work:** Subsequent to these discussions, the Canada Farm Labour Pools discussed the hiring of disabled persons. The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) reported success in placing disabled persons in seasonal work, and in greenhouse work which is almost a year-around activity. A full report on this project will be prepared for the next Federal-Provincial Agricultural

Development Conference to be held in October 1982.

**Innovative Attempts:** The Committee is aware of a number of innovative attempts to match disabled workers with particular tasks in agricultural settings which were highly successful. Two examples are offered:

- **Greenhouse:** A greenhouse farming operation which was staffed by physically disabled persons continues to expand and operate. Greenhouses are particularly accessible and well-suited to the needs of workers with mobility disabilities.
- **Dairy Farms:** A feasibility study on placement of mentally disabled persons in dairy farming jobs prompted such a positive response from the farmers surveyed that a team of workers was made available on a contract basis. A significant number of the farmers who hired these mentally disabled workers demonstrated their satisfaction by rehiring them or recommending them to other farm operators. All those who hired these teams agreed it had been a satisfactory experience and several, in particularly telling comments, said they wished they had known earlier about the availability and capabilities of these workers.

**Encourage Hiring:** In a report tabled by the Secretary of State in December 1981, CEIC replied

that the Program for the Employment Disadvantaged (PED), could be used to encourage hiring of disabled persons in agriculture. Field officers were directed to explore this possibility, but they discovered that most agricultural jobs did not meet the PED criteria—namely, continuous year-round employment.



**Negative Image:** The Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded did not like the recommendation because of the negative image of farm colonies. It stressed that it should only apply to those persons who like agricultural work.

**Explore Ways:** The Committee applauds CEIC for continuing to explore ways of implementing the intent of this recommendation when it discovered that the PED program was not the best vehicle. It encourages CEIC to continue exploring further prospects for matching disabled persons with suitable jobs in the agricultural industry.