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Career Journeys and Job Experiences in the Goulburn-Murray Fruit Industry

By Roger Wilkinson, Michael Santhanam-Martin and Lisa Cowan

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Executive Summary

Businesses in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry have consistently identified labour and skills shortages as critical constraints to business success and growth. Based on survey data collected in 2018 from 57 current, ongoing employees, this study shows that employment conditions and human resource management practices influence employees' job satisfaction and career intentions.

The study was guided by two broad research questions:

1. What career journeys have current employees followed (including employees' perception of how skills have been acquired)?
2. What aspects of the industry and of individual jobs are contributing to employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs and with the industry, and to their future career intentions?

We used psychological contract theory as a theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between employees' experience of their jobs and their job satisfaction and future career intentions. Psychological contract theory proposes that the relationship between an employee and their employer or workplace can be considered as a form of informal contract where the employer promises (explicitly or implicitly) to provide a range of benefits and that an employee's job satisfaction and commitment to their employer are positively correlated with the extent to which these promises and commitments are met. The theory also proposes that an employee's intention to leave their job is correlated with perceived breaches of the psychological contract.

The small sample size does limit the generalisability of the findings.

Attraction

People were attracted to the fruit industry for different reasons: some because there was a job available that met personal needs, some because some aspect of the industry appealed to them and others because they had a family history with the industry. There was little difference in the length of time with their current employer between those attracted to the industry because there was a job available and those attracted to the industry for a different reason.

Promotion

People who received a promotion while they were with an employer stayed significantly longer with that employer than those whose roles did not change.

Training and development

Employees at all levels of seniority rated on-the-job training as having made the greatest contribution to the skills and knowledge needed to do their job. Those with higher qualifications identified a contribution to their skills and knowledge from formal training, whether this training was linked to a qualification or not.

Managers rated formal education or training (whether linked to a qualification or not) as much more important to their skills and knowledge than did workers at lower occupational levels. Employees working in larger businesses rated education or training linked to a qualification as having made a significantly greater contribution to their skills and knowledge than those working in smaller businesses. Middle managers in large firms had more education and training than middle managers in small firms.

Job satisfaction and benefits

Those in more senior jobs tended to have more years of experience, supervise more staff and have a higher salary. They were also more likely to get additional benefits. The difference between Assistant manager and Manager positions was not clear.

While all employees worked similar hours typically, senior and middle managers worked substantially more hours than other workers during the busiest times of the year. Middle managers had lower levels of job satisfaction than senior managers and workers.

Promises made and fulfilled

Psychological contract theory examines the formal and informal promises or commitments that employers make to employees about their jobs, and the extent to which these promises are fulfilled. There was a range of promises made to employees, with “Safety and security” and “Autonomy” being the categories with the highest percentage of promises. Half of the promises, including most of the “Training and opportunity” promises were reported as having been made to fewer than 50 per cent of employees.

Where promises were made, employees rated fulfilment by their employers as generally high. Employees with high promise fulfilment scores for “Safety and security” and “Enabling good work” were the least likely to intend to leave their employer. If an employee scored high job satisfaction and organisational commitment, they were unlikely to leave their employer.

The fewest promises were made to middle managers and they were the least fulfilled. Larger employers tended to make more promises to employees than small scale employers and fulfilled their promises to a greater extent, particularly for training and development.

Retention

There were two main themes in respondents’ comments about the factors that would encourage them or discourage them from continuing to work in the fruit industry. One was a generally positive description of the fruit industry as one with challenges and opportunities for growth in an industry where they just liked working. The other theme was more prosaic, describing a desire to be paid adequately for the work they did and be treated well by their employer.

Implications

It is important for employers to get the basics right to attract and retain staff: focus on safety and security and enabling good work. Once those things are in place, focus on training and opportunity.

There are particular pressures that affect employees in middle management positions (leading hands, supervisions, assistant managers and managers). They had low job satisfaction, and their work hours were as long as those of senior managers even though they received a lot less pay. Yet they were no less committed to their employer. Individual employers and the industry should consider ways to make these roles more attractive, for example by ensuring that the expectations of the roles are reasonable, and that these expectations are set out clearly in position descriptions.

Smaller businesses face the greatest challenge in retaining employees. Compared to larger businesses, managers in smaller businesses had lower job satisfaction and more of their employees expressed an intention to leave their employer. Due to their size, small businesses may find it difficult to meet employees’ expectations for training, development and promotion. There may be opportunities to develop collective training opportunities for the region, and for industry to develop human resource management training targeted at the needs of small business.

Recommendations

For individual employers

- Focus on good human resource management practices, with an immediate focus on getting the basic aspects of the employment relationship right. This means things like offering a secure job, safe workplace and adequate pay, and providing what employees need to do their job.
- Find out the needs of different employees and focus on them. For example, not everyone wants a promotion and the increased responsibilities associated with it.

- Remember that staff who enter the fruit industry for pragmatic reasons without any particular attraction to it are as likely to become competent and committed employees as those who enter with a love for the industry.
- Consider human resource planning to understand the current and future needs of your business, including where development and growth in roles can be prioritised. Specifically, consider ways to support interested leading hands and supervisors to transition towards management opportunities.
- Be explicit with employees about the promotion opportunities available in your business.
- Consider working together with other small businesses to create career pathways for employees, which could be across multiple businesses.

For the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry

- With the training sector, develop a targeted human resource management training package for employers within the industry including some specialised content for small businesses. The training package may be able to utilise existing resources, such as those on the *People in Agriculture* website (<https://www.peopleinag.com.au/>).
- Work with training providers to design employee training packages that prioritises more informal and applied training. Especially, there is an opportunity to develop a strategy for upskilling leading hands and supervisors to enable transition to more senior 'decider' roles. This could incorporate formal and informal elements (e.g. mentoring).
- Work with businesses to develop position descriptions, to clarify expectations with employees. These position descriptions could potentially be shared across the regional industry with agree job titles and salary ranges, and could help clarify expectations of the transition from a supervisor or leading hand position to a manger position.
- Work with small businesses to create collective development and training opportunities for employees.

For government

- Consider how vocational education and training (e.g. 'free TAFE' and microcredentialling) can be utilised to increase regional fruit industry engagement with the accredited training system.
- Work with industry to enable collective responses to managing workforce development needs, especially among small businesses.

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1 Introduction

This report presents the results of a research project carried out in 2018 to improve understanding of the career journeys and job experiences of permanent employees in the fruit industry in the Goulburn-Murray region of Victoria (Including the City of Greater Shepparton and the Shires of Moira, Campaspe and Strathbogie). The research had two components:

1. A survey of orchard employees, which attracted just over 50 responses (the exact number of responses varied for different questions), and
2. A qualitative study consisting of nine semi-structured interviews with orchard employees, carried out as a Masters student research project.

This report focuses on the survey. A summary of the qualitative study is presented in Appendix A.

The Goulburn-Murray region is of national significance for the production of temperate tree fruits including pome fruits, stone fruits and cherries (RMCG & GVFGSWG 2013). Fruit is supplied to both domestic and export fresh fruit markets, and to the food processing industry. An industry strategic planning activity in 2015 identified workforce issues as one of the most significant challenges facing the industry (Catalyst Exchange 2015). This includes availability of seasonal labour for harvesting, and the availability and skills of permanent employees for “middle management” positions.

This study builds on previous work by Santhanam-Martin and Cowan (2017) which sought to understand more about these middle management positions. Based on interviews with 20 orchard employers, Santhanam-Martin and Cowan (2017) drew the following conclusions about middle management roles in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry:

- There are a variety of job titles in use in the industry to refer to middle management positions including “leading hand”, “supervisor”, “assistant manager” and “manager”, and these titles are not used consistently by different employers. The title “orchard manager” in particular can refer to quite different roles on different orchards.
- It was generally orchards of 100 hectares in size and larger that required one or more people in middle management positions.
- Most employers preferred to fill positions using internal recruitment: that is, promoting staff already working in the business into more senior roles. However, some employers had also recruited externally (or have attempted to recruit externally, but without success).
- In assessing candidates for jobs, most employers placed greater emphasis on their prior practical experience in the industry, rather than formal qualifications.
- While in the past there has been very little recruitment of university graduates into orchard jobs, some employers saw a potential for more graduate roles in the future.
- Around half of the employers who participated in the study reported recent difficulties filling vacant positions, including several middle management positions.
- The study recommended that further research be undertaken to understand employees’ experiences of and perspectives on jobs and career pathways in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry.

Where the previous study explored workforce issues from the perspective of employers, the study reported here focuses on the experiences and perspectives of employees. It starts with the premise that addressing orchard employers’ current difficulties recruiting to middle management positions requires either that existing employees be retained and developed (internal recruitment); and/or that new employees be attracted to the industry (and then developed).

Employees’ work experiences in the fruit industry can be conceptualised as a career journey involving initial entry followed by either retention or exit. Employees who remain in the industry may remain with the same employer or may change employers, and they may experience career progression into more senior positions, or they may not. As illustrated in Figure 1, this conceptualisation highlights three important

processes that contribute to a business or industry’s ability to meet its workforce needs – attraction, retention and development. As noted by Nettle et al. (2011), these three processes also influence each other:

- Employees’ perceptions and experiences of development opportunities contribute to retention
- Retention and development enable each other
- A reputation for development and retention enables attraction

This conceptualisation of a career journey influenced by attraction, retention and development processes underpins the approach taken in this study.

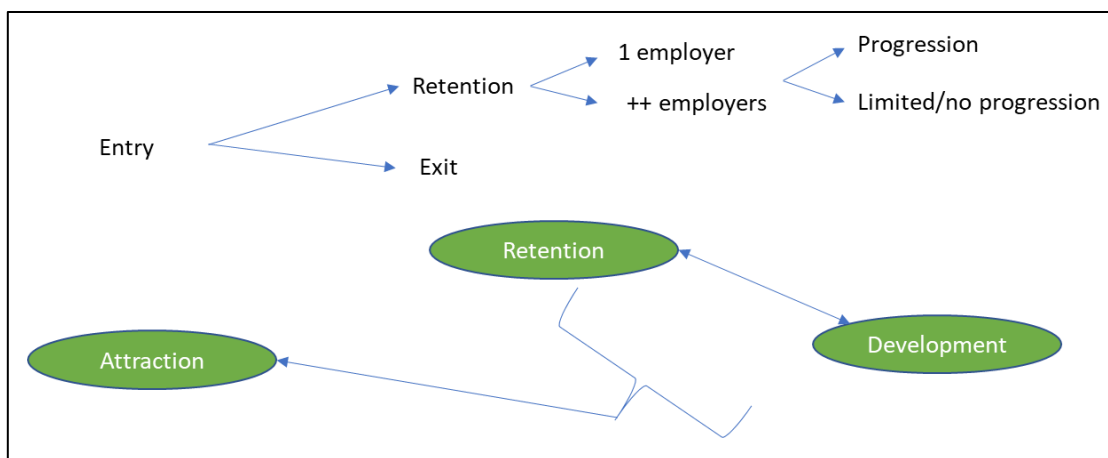


Figure 1 A generic representation of a "career journey" showing the roles of attraction, retention and development

1.1 Research questions

Focusing on the permanent workforce rather than seasonal labour, this study aimed to identify factors that are affecting workforce attraction, retention and development in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry, through collecting data about current employees’ career journeys and job experiences. It was guided by two broad research questions:

1. What career journeys have current employees followed (including employees’ perception of how skills have been acquired)?
2. What aspects of the industry and of individual jobs are contributing to employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs and with the industry, and to their future career intentions?

We used psychological contract theory (Kickul 2001) as a theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between employees’ experience of their jobs and their job satisfaction and future career intentions. Psychological contract theory proposes that the relationship between an employee and their employer or workplace can be considered as a form of informal contract where the employer promises (explicitly or implicitly) to provide a range of benefits and that an employee’s job satisfaction and commitment to their employer are positively correlated with the extent to which these promises and commitments are met (i.e. “promise fulfilment”). The theory also proposes that an employees’ intention to leave their job is correlated with perceived breaches of the psychological contract. Psychological contract theory has been used previously to explore farm employment relationships in the Australian dairy industry (Nettle et al. 2011).

We used psychological contract theory to explore:

- The extent of “promise fulfilment” by the employer for different aspects of employees’ job experience

- Correlations between the extent of promise fulfilment and employees' job satisfaction, commitment to their organisation and future career intentions (including their interest in career advancement with their current employer, their intention to leave their current employer and their intention to leave the fruit industry).

2 Methods

2.1 Research design

Survey research is a standard research approach when the objective is to gather a well-defined set of data from a large sample of respondents. The survey was designed to be completed by the respondents themselves, not by an interviewer, and was implemented in the Qualtrics online survey platform.

The survey was open for responses from 31 July 2019 to 30 November 2018 (18 weeks). The URL link was distributed through a range of industry networks and organisations including Apple and Pear Australia Limited, the GV Growers Group (a local industry Facebook group) and the networks of Agriculture Victoria. As an incentive to participate, respondents had the option of entering a prize draw to win one of five \$100 gift vouchers. In an effort to maximise response rates, Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association (CDFGA) and Fruit Growers Victoria (FGV) were contracted to visit orchards and recruit respondents in the Cobram and Shepparton areas. Feedback from both CDFGA and FGV was that it would be easier to get people to complete paper copies of the survey rather than the online version, and so a large number of paper copies were distributed, along with reply paid envelopes. Paper copy responses were then entered into Qualtrics by Agriculture Victoria.

The orchard visit approach to recruitment was less successful than anticipated because of resourcing issues with those conducting field visits. This led to an under sampling of the Shepparton area and a lower number of total respondents than desired. A total of 80 responses were received, however many were incomplete. The number of complete responses differed between questions, within the range 52 to 57.

This small sample size limits the statistical power of the analysis, and means that caution is required in making generalisations from these results. The small sample means that few measured differences are statistically significant at the standard level of 5 per cent (this is effectively the probability the measured result is not due to chance). Where we report the statistical significance of measured differences in tables in this document, we provide the level of significance where the value of p is less than or equal to 0.25 (which corresponds with a level of significance of 25%). It cannot be assumed that the results obtained from this small sample are representative of the experiences of all permanent workers in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry.

2.2 Questionnaire design

In line with the research questions guiding the study, the survey collected data about:

- respondents' career history in the fruit industry
- their current job
- their perceptions of how they have acquired the skills to do their job
- their perceptions of promises made and promises fulfilled by their employer
- their job satisfaction and future career intentions

Further details about the structure of the survey is provided below (Table 1), and the complete survey instrument is shown in Appendix B.

Table 1 Description of questionnaire content

Question topic	Rationale for questions
Eligibility (Questions 1 – 3)	The target population is people who earn a salary or wages in businesses that grow and/or store and/or pack fruit within the Goulburn-Murray region, but excluding seasonal labourers.
Career history (Questions 4 – 16)	This section aims to create an overview of respondents' career history in the fruit industry including year of first employment (including seasonal work), reason for initial attraction, how much of their working life has been spent in the fruit industry, and information about their last two employers before their current employer, including whether they experienced a role change or promotion, and reason for leaving those employers.
Current job (Questions 17 – 29)	These questions provide more details about respondents' current position.
Education and training (Questions 30 – 33)	The section is relevant to the question of how skills are acquired. It captures respondents' level of formal education and the level of any specific agriculture or horticulture qualification, as well as a subjective assessment of the relative contributions to their skills and knowledge made by formal education and training and by informal on-the-job learning. Respondents were asked to report their perception of the contribution of the different skills acquisition methods on a 5-point Likert scale from "no contribution" to "major contribution".
Psychological contract theory (Questions 34 – 38)	This section collects the data required for the application of psychological contract theory. This includes data on what types of promises or commitments employees thought their employers had made to them and the extent to which they felt these commitments had been fulfilled, and data on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and future intentions.
Best and worst (Questions 39 – 40)	Two final free text questions aimed at elucidating respondents' perceptions of the best and worst aspects of working in the fruit industry.

More detailed information about the groupings of variables and calculated variables (seniority and years of experience) used in the analysis can be found in Appendix C.

2.3 Psychological Contract Theory

Respondents were asked to identify which of the items in a list their employer had promised or committed to provide. For each of the promises chosen, they were then asked to indicate the extent to which the promise had been fulfilled, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not fulfilled at all to 5 = completely fulfilled). This list of promises was based on those used by Nettle *et al.* (2011), which in turn were based on Kickul (2001). We adapted the individual items to suit the current research context.

In her original analysis, Kickul (2001) used Principal Components Analysis to group the individual promise items into categories. Each of these categories then became a variable in the psychological contract model. Nettle *et al.* (2011) and Ford *et al.* (2018) also used Kickul's structure, though the Chronbach's alpha values reported by Ford *et al.* for the items grouped according to Kickul's structure were low, suggesting an alternative structure may have been more useful. Preliminary analysis of our data using Principal Components Analysis and manual examination of variables (including correlation coefficients) showed that the individual promise items did not fit well into Kickul's classification: items grouped together by Kickul exhibited different patterns in our data. We therefore decided to develop our own classification of the items into a set of variables that better reflected the patterns in our data. These variables were:

- Training and opportunity
- Enabling good work
- Safety and security
- Benefits
- Autonomy
- Increasing responsibilities

A full description of the model is provided in Appendix D. For completeness, Appendix D also includes an analysis according to Kickul's structure.

2.4 Analysis

The survey was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS Version 21. In several places in this document we report the results of statistical analysis. The main purpose of statistical analysis of surveys is to use the findings from a survey of a sample of the population to predict the findings of a census of the complete population. Statistical analysis relies for its veracity on the sample being random and thus representative of the population from which it is drawn. Where respondents select themselves, as is usually the case in surveys such as this, there is a possibility that the sample is not representative.

A simple explanation of the way statistical analysis works is that it uses the ratio of variation between groups to variation within groups to calculate the probability that a measured difference between the groups is likely to be real, and not due to chance. This probability is reported as a 'p value'. An arbitrarily chosen p value of 0.05 is usually used as the threshold, which indicates a 5 per cent probability that the measured difference is due to chance. If the probability, or p value, is less than this, the result is said to be 'statistically significant', and thus unlikely to be due to chance. The smaller the p value, the less likely a difference is due to chance. In this survey, a difference between two groups generally must be quite large before it is statistically significant. Several factors may contribute to this, including the small sample and the diversity of the horticultural industry workforce.

Several statistical tests were used in this analysis. The Chi-square test was used to compare the number of respondents in different categories. The F test was used to compare the mean values of a variable between groups. Where mean values of a variable were compared across more than two groups and found to be significantly different, Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was used to identify which groups had significantly different mean values from which other groups. Finally, Pearson correlations were used to determine the statistical significance of the correlation between two variables.

3 Profile of respondents

Summary

The number of usable responses varied between 52 and 57 for different questions.

The demographic profile of the sample was similar to the relevant population and hence in the analysis we did not weight the sample by demographic characteristics.

Responses were dominated by those from large scale businesses.

The small sample size does limit the generalisability of the findings.

3.1 Demographic characteristics

Tables 2 to 5 below compare demographic characteristics of the survey sample with those of the relevant population. The source of population counts was ABS Census of Population and Housing 2016, persons aged 15 years and over employed (but not business owners or contributing family members) in fruit and tree nut growing, place of work City of Greater Shepparton, Moira Shire, Strathbogie Shire or Campaspe Shire. The size of the population was 698 persons.

The age profile of the survey respondents was close to that of the relevant population, though people aged 40 to 49 and 50-59 were over-represented, and people aged 60 and over were under-represented (Table 2).

Table 2 Age profile of respondents (n=52)

Age	Frequency of response (per cent)	
	Survey	Population
29 or younger	15	23
30 to 39	23	23
40 to 49	31	19
50 to 59	27	22
60 or older	4	13

The gender profile of the respondents was similar to that of the population, with females slightly over-represented (Table 3).

Table 3 Gender profile of respondents (n=52)

Gender	Frequency of response (per cent)	
	Survey	Population
Male	65	72
Female	35	28

Approximately half the respondents were in the Shepparton area and another 42 per cent were in the Cobram area (Table 4). The rest were scattered around north-east Victoria. We cannot accurately allocate respondents to Local Government Areas because we asked them for the nearest town to their workplace, however, we can estimate their LGA. The survey under-sampled the Shepparton area and over-sampled the Cobram area.

Table 4 Location profile of respondents (n=57)

Location	Frequency of response (per cent)	
	Survey	Population
Shepparton area	51	66
Cobram area	42	25
Other	7	9

The sample had a generally higher level of education than the population, though not substantially so (Table 5).

Table 5 Educational profile of respondents (n=53)

Education	Frequency of response (per cent)	
	Survey	Population
Degree	11	8
Diploma or certificate	28	25
Year 12	30	30
Year 11 or below	30	37

Overall, the demographic profile of the sample was not widely at variance with the population. Given this and the small size of the sample there appears to be no benefit in weighting the sample by demographic characteristics. Consequently, the analysis in this report uses an unweighted sample.

3.2 Current position

Fifty-six respondents reported the basis of their employment. Eighty per cent of them had ongoing or fixed-term full-time employment, including paid leave. A further 16 per cent were employed casually, with no paid leave, while four per cent had some other employment arrangement (mostly a part-time position with paid leave).

The median number of years with their employer was seven years (mean 9.6 years). One-quarter of respondents had been with their employer for three years or less, while almost one-third had been with their employer for more than 10 years (Table 6).

Table 6 Years with employer (n=57)

Years with employer	Frequency of response (per cent)
1 to 3	25
4 to 6	18
7 to 10	26
11 to 20	21
21 or more	10

Responses were dominated by those from large scale businesses, both in area (Table 7) and number of employees (Table 8).

Table 7 Scale of employer by area (n=52)

Scale of employer by area	Frequency of response (per cent)
Less than 50 ha	2
50 to 99 ha	15
100 to 199 ha	19
200 to 399 ha	25
More than 400 ha	39

Table 8 Scale of employer by number of employees (n=50)

Scale of employer by number of employees	Frequency of response (per cent)
2 to 4 employees	14
5 to 10	20
11 to 20	14
More than 20	52

The median number of hours usually worked per week was 40. Sixty-nine per cent said they usually worked either a 38 or 40 hours per week. At busy times work hours were much longer: the median hours worked per week at busy times was 60.

The majority of respondents' time was spent on growing fruit (Table 9). The table over-states the extent to which they perform the various tasks given several respondents answered "all" or "most" for more than one task.

Table 9 Work tasks (n=54, multiple responses)

Over a year, work time spent most or entirely on	Frequency of response (per cent)
Growing fruit	58
Storing and/or packing fruit	39
Office administration	30
Transporting fruit	15

The employee respondents were spread across all levels of seniority, from general manger, through various levels of management, to workers with no management role (Table 10). Some respondents had specialist roles that may have involved seniority without necessarily having a management role.

Table 10 Position title (n=54)

Position title	Frequency of response (per cent)
General manager	11
Manager	26
Assistant manager	9
Supervisor or leading hand	21
Hand	13
Administration	7
Other (generally specialist roles)	13

The median number of people reporting to the role was 3 (Table 11). One quarter of respondents supervised no one.

Table 11 Number of employees supervised, both directly and indirectly (n=50)

Number of employees reporting to the position	Frequency of response (per cent)
0	24
1 to 3	26
4 to 6	28
7 to 10	12
11 or more	10

Gross income of respondents was widely spread (Table 12). It ranged from \$600 to \$799 per week (\$31,200 to \$41,599 per year) to \$2000 or more per week (\$156,000 or more per year). Half of all respondents earned \$1000 to \$1499 per week (\$52,000 to \$77,999 per year).

Table 12 Gross income per week (n=42)

Gross income per week	Frequency of response (per cent)
\$600 to \$799	14
\$800 to \$999	14
\$1000 to \$1499	52
\$1500 to \$1999	10
\$2000 or more	10

Respondents were provided with a variety of additional benefits by their employer. The most common benefits were a mobile phone which could be used for personal calls and a company vehicle that was available for private use, each of which were received by approximately half the respondents (Table 13).

Table 13 Additional benefits received (n=53)

	Frequency of response (per cent)
Mobile phone which can be used for personal calls	55
Company vehicle available for private use	45
Financial bonuses	25
Laptop or tablet computer	23
Free accommodation	9
Additional paid leave (in addition to the standard 4 weeks)	9
Free lunches	4
None of these	25

4 Results

4.1 Career journeys

Summary

People were attracted to the fruit industry for different reasons: some because there was a job available that met personal needs, some because some aspect of the industry appealed to them and others because they had a family history with the industry.

There was little difference in the length of time with their current employer between those attracted to the industry because there was a job available and those attracted to the industry for a specific reason related to the fruit industry.

People tended to be in their current job longer than they were in their previous job in the fruit industry.

Individuals whose role changed while they were with an employer stayed significantly longer with that employer than those whose role did not change. In every case, the change of role involved a promotion.

Fifty-five people answered an open question about what initially attracted them to the fruit industry. We classified the responses using thematic analysis. Almost half gave the pragmatic reason that there was a job available that met their needs (Table 14). For example, “I was looking for work and there was ongoing employment available”. One-third said they chose to work in the industry because something about it attracted them to it. For example, “Enjoy working with trees”. Responses classified as “other” included opportunities for learning and development, prospect of a stable career, and remuneration.

Table 14 Initial attraction to the fruit industry (n=55, 64 multiple responses)

What initially attracted you to work in the fruit industry?	Frequency of response (per cent)
There was a job available that met my needs	45
Something about the industry attracted me to it	33
Family history in the industry	16
Other	20

Once employed in the fruit industry, respondents overwhelmingly remained in the industry (Table 15). Three quarters of them had spent all or almost all their time in the fruit industry once they first started working in it.

Table 15 Proportion of working life in fruit industry since first worked in the industry (n=58)

Proportion of working life in fruit industry	Frequency of response (per cent)
All or almost all	76
More than half	14
About half	5
Less than half	3
Only occasionally or short periods	2

People stayed longer with an employer than they had stayed with their previous employer (Table 16). The mean number of years respondents had had been with their current employer was 9.6, compared with 6.3 years for the previous employer and 3.6 years for the employer before that. The differences were significant (F test, $p=0.01$), though the mean value for the employer before the previous employer was not significantly different from the other two employers, likely because of a low number of data points (only 12 respondents identified having had an employer before their previous employer).

Table 16 Length of time with different employers (57 respondents, 91 jobs)

Job	Mean number of years
Current	9.6 a
Previous	6.3 b
Job before previous	3.6 b

Values with different letters appended are significantly different (LSD, $p<0.05$)

Individuals whose role changed while they were with an employer stayed significantly longer with that employer than those whose role did not change (mean of 7.3 years, compared with 3.8 years, F test, $p<0.01$). In every case, the change of role involved a promotion.

Seventeen respondents offered reasons for leaving either or both of their previous employers. These reasons included that the new job was better (8 responses), the previous job ended (6 responses) and that the new job offered increased pay (2 responses).

We also tested whether employees’ initial attraction to the fruit industry was associated with differences in their subsequent career pathway. The classifications we used were “there was a job available that met my needs”, “something about the industry attracted me to it” and “other”. There were slight differences in length of time with employers between employees with different reasons for their initial attraction to the fruit industry, but the differences were not significant. Comparing the “job available” group with the “industry attraction” group, there was little difference in length of time with their current employer but the “job available” people had stayed less time with their previous employer than the “industry attraction people” (Table 17). The relatively high mean length of time with their current employer for people who gave other reasons for their initial attraction to the industry as “other” may be because half of them had a family history in the industry (people working in their own family’s business had been in their current position much longer than other respondents).

Table 17 Length of time with different employers by initial attraction to working in fruit industry

Initial attraction to working in fruit industry	Mean number of years with employer	
	Current (n=55)	Previous (n=33)
There was a job available that met my needs	9.4	4.7
Something about the industry attracted me to it	8.9	6.0
Other	11.4	5.8

We tested whether differences in subsequent career pathways were associated with differences in initial attraction to the fruit industry. There were no significant associations for any of the variables we tested. Employment pathway variables we tested included years in the industry, level of seniority achieved, time in various jobs, and whether they had received a promotion. We also tested for differences in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, advancement intention, intention to leave employer and intention to leave the fruit industry.

4.2 Education, training and skills acquisition

Summary

Those with higher qualifications identified a contribution to their skills and knowledge from formal training, whether this training was linked to a qualification or not.

Employees at all levels of seniority rated on-the-job training as having made the greatest contribution to the skills and knowledge needed to do their job.

Managers rated formal education or training (whether linked to a qualification or not) as much more important to their skills and knowledge than did workers.

Employees working in larger businesses rated education or training linked to a qualification as having made a significantly greater contribution to their skills and knowledge than those working in smaller businesses.

Middle managers in large firms had more education and training than middle managers in small firms.

We asked respondents how much different forms of training contributed to the skills and knowledge they needed to do their current job. The higher their qualifications, the greater the contribution they said education or training linked to a qualification made (Table 18). This effect was highly significant. Formal training not linked to a qualification was also seen as making a greater contribution to knowledge and skills by those with higher qualifications. Those with university qualifications rated informal on-the-job learning as having made less contribution to their knowledge and skills than those with lower qualifications.

Table 18 Mean perceived contribution of different types of training to knowledge and skills by education (n varies from 47 to 53)

	University	TAFE or RTO	Year 12	Year 11 or below	Significance of difference (F test)
Education or training linked to a qualification	4.7 a	3.3 b	2.2 c	1.8 c	*** (p=0.00)
Other training or professional development not linked to a qualification	3.8	2.9	3.1	2.3	ns (p=0.21)
Informal on-the-job learning	3.5	4.5	4.4	4.5	ns (p=0.25)

Scale from 1 = "no contribution" to 5 = "major contribution"

Values with different letters appended are significantly different from others in the same row (LSD, p<0.05)

Employees at all levels of seniority rated informal on-the job training as having made the greatest contribution to the skills and knowledge needed to do their job (Table 19). Employees at all levels rated training and professional development not linked to a qualification as slightly more important than education or training linked to a qualification. Managers rated formal education or training (whether linked to a qualification or not) as much more important than did workers.

Table 19 Mean perceived contribution of different types of training to knowledge and skills by seniority (n varies from 47 to 53)

	Senior managers	Middle managers	Workers	Significance of difference (F test)
Education or training linked to a qualification	2.8	3.1	1.9	ns (p=0.10)
Other training or professional development not linked to a qualification	3.0 a	3.3 a	2.0 b	* (p=0.02)
Informal on-the-job learning	4.5	4.4	4.3	ns

Scale from 1 = “no contribution” to 5 = “major contribution”

Values with different letters appended are significantly different from others in the same row (LSD, p<0.05)

Employees working in larger businesses rated education or training linked to a qualification as having made a significantly greater contribution to their skills and knowledge than those working in smaller businesses (Table 20). They also rated informal on-the-job learning as having made a lesser contribution to their skills and knowledge than those in smaller businesses. There was little difference in the ratings of training not linked to a qualification.

Table 20 Mean perceived contribution of different types of training to knowledge and skills by business size (n varies from 47 to 53)

	Up to 20 employees	More than 20 employees	Significance of difference (F test)
Education or training linked to a qualification	2.0	3.3	** (p=0.01)
Other training or professional development not linked to a qualification	3.0	2.9	ns
Informal on-the-job learning	4.6	4.2	ns

Scale from 1 = “no contribution” to 5 = “major contribution”

There was little difference in perception of the different types of training between employees working in different parts of the industry.

Employees working in larger businesses had a significantly higher level of education than employees in smaller businesses (Chi-square test, p<0.05). The greatest difference in education levels between employees in different size firms was for middle managers (Table 21). Of the 6 respondents with university degrees, 5 were middle managers in large firms. There was no significant difference in education levels between employees at different levels.

Table 21 Education levels by business size

Education level	Frequency of response (per cent)	
	Up to 20 employees (n=23)	More than 20 employees (n=25)
University	0	24
TAFE or RTO	22	40
Year 12	35	20
Year 11 or below	43	16

4.3 Job experiences at different levels of seniority

Summary

Those in more senior jobs tended to have more years of experience, supervise more staff and have a higher salary. They were also more likely to get additional benefits.

The difference between Assistant manager and Manager positions was not clear.

While all employees worked similar hours typically, senior and middle managers worked substantially more hours than workers during the busiest times of year.

Middle managers had lower levels of job satisfaction than senior managers and workers.

Respondents with more senior jobs tended to have had more years since they first worked in the fruit industry and supervised a greater number of staff (both directly and indirectly) than those with more junior jobs (Table 22). They also were more likely to have a higher salary. Higher salaries were also associated with having more years of industry experience.

Table 22 Seniority by position title (n=50)

Position title	Mean years since first worked in fruit industry	Mean number of staff supervised	Most likely weekly salary
General manager	26	11	\$2000–\$2999
Manager	14	7	\$1000–\$1499
Assistant manager	14	4	\$1000–\$1499
Supervisor or leading hand	16	8	\$800–\$999
Hand	10	0	\$600–\$799
Administration	13	2	\$1000–\$1499
Other (generally specialist roles)	15	5	\$1000–\$1499

The term “middle manager” covers a range of positions, including supervisors, leading hands, assistant managers and managers. Those in “Manager” positions were spread across small and large firms. In contrast, those in “Assistant manager” positions were almost all in small firms. It is not clear how their jobs differ from “Manager” jobs. Further, supervisors or leading hands had similar years since first working in the fruit industry as managers and assistant managers, and similar numbers of staff to supervise, yet received much lower salaries.

All senior managers were provided by their employer with a mobile phone and company vehicle, both of which could be used for personal purposes. About half of the middle managers were provided with these things, as was a smaller proportion of workers. Half of the senior managers were provided with a laptop or tablet computer, and less than one quarter of middle managers and workers were provided with one.

All respondents said they worked significantly more hours per week at the busiest times of year than they usually worked (Table 23). There was only a small difference in weekly hours usually worked for people with different levels of seniority. However, at the busiest times of year both senior and middle managers worked substantially more hours than workers.

Table 23 Workload by seniority (n=54)

Workload	Senior managers	Middle managers	Workers	Significance of difference (F test)
Mean hours usually worked per week	44 ab	43 a	38 b	* (p=0.05)
Mean hours worked per week at busiest times	65 a	63 a	50 b	** (p=0.01)

Values with different letters appended are significantly different from others in the same row (LSD, p<0.05)

There were differences in overall perceptions and intentions between employees with different levels of seniority, but none of them were significant (Table 24). Middle managers had lower levels of job satisfaction than senior managers and workers. Their organisational commitment was only slightly lower than senior managers and their intentions to leave both their employer and the fruit industry were no different from senior managers.

Table 24 Overall perceptions and intentions of employees (n varies from 50 to 53)

	Senior managers	Middle managers	Workers	Significance of difference (F test)
Job satisfaction	4.4	3.9	4.3	ns (p=0.21)
Organisational commitment	3.8	3.6	3.4	ns
Advancement intention	3.5	3.7	3.8	ns
Intention to leave employer	2.4	2.4	2.0	ns
Intention to leave fruit industry	2.8	2.7	2.2	ns

4.4 The “psychological contract” between employer and employee

Summary

There was a range of promises made to employees, with “Safety and security” and “Autonomy” being the categories with the highest percentage of promises. Half of the promises, including most of the “Training and opportunity” promises were reported as having been made to fewer than 50 per cent of employees.

Where promises were made, employees rated fulfillment by their employers as generally high, with all of them averaging at least 4 on a scale from 1 (not fulfilled at all) to 5 (completely fulfilled).

For all areas of the psychological contract, promise fulfillment was negatively correlated with intention to leave an employer. That is, employees who perceived that employers’ promises to them had been fulfilled reported that they were less likely to intend to leave their employer. The psychological contract variables with the strongest negative correlation with intention to leave were “Safety and security” and “Enabling good work”

Employees who reported high job satisfaction and organisational commitment were also unlikely to intend to leave their employer.

Middle managers responded that fewer promises had been made to them by employers than senior managers and workers. Middle managers also perceived that these promises were less fulfilled.

Larger employers tended to make more promises to employees than small scale employers and fulfilled their promises to a greater extent, particularly for training and development.

The percentage of respondents reporting that a particular promise had been made to them by their employer varied from a high of 75 per cent for “Safe work environment” to a low of eight per cent for “Lifestyle benefits” (Table 25). The categories with the highest percentage of promises made were “Safety and security” and “Autonomy”. Low numbers of employees reported promises being made for several items in the “Training and opportunity” category. Employees’ ratings of the extent to which employment promises had been fulfilled by their employers were generally high, all of them averaging at least 4 on a 5-point scale.

Table 25 Employees’ perception of which promises or commitments were made by employer and the extent to which they were fulfilled (n=53)

Promise	Per cent of respondents saying it was promised	Mean rating of extent to which promise was fulfilled (for those who said it was promised) *
Training and opportunity		
Opportunity to develop new skills	57	4.1
On the job training	55	4.3
Meaningful work	45	4.3
Opportunities for personal growth	40	4.6
Recognition of my accomplishments	38	4.5
Career guidance and mentoring	36	4.4
Off-site training during work hours	32	4.4
Opportunities for promotion and advancement	32	4.3
Enabling good work		
Adequate equipment to perform the job	64	4.6
Enough resources to do the job	62	4.6
A reasonable workload	51	4.3
Challenging and interesting work	47	4.5
Well-defined job responsibilities	45	4.4
Safety and security		
Safe work environment	75	4.5
Job security	70	4.6
A pleasant working environment	66	4.7
Competitive salary	43	4.3
Benefits		
Paid annual holidays	60	4.8
Cost of living benefits (e.g. discounted rent, farm produce)	9	4.0
Lifestyle benefits (e.g. pleasant living environment)	8	4.0
Autonomy		
Freedom over how the job is done	62	4.1
Participation in decision-making	58	4.1
Increasing responsibilities		
Increasing responsibilities	72	4.1

* Rating scale from 1 “not fulfilled at all” to 5 “completely fulfilled”

Correlations between psychological contract and employee satisfaction and intention

In this section we report correlations between the variables. While less powerful statistically than regression models, correlation analysis requires fewer assumptions about the variables and still allows some interpretation about which variables are important to employee development and retention. We chose this approach because regression analysis of the model was not satisfactory due to high intercorrelations between the independent (predictor) variables, regardless of how the variables in the psychological contract model were arranged.

All the psychological contract variables were negatively and significantly correlated with intention to leave the employer (Table 26). The strongest correlations were for “Safety and security” and “Enabling good work”. “Training and opportunity” and “Benefits” were also highly correlated (negatively) with intention to leave the employer, and “Autonomy” was correlated but not significantly so.

Table 26 Correlations between variables in the psychological contract model and other selected variables

	Job satisfaction	Organisational commitment	Advancement intention	Intention to leave employer	Intention to leave industry
1 Training and opportunity	.743 ***	.603 ***	.259	-.402 **	-.030
2 Enabling good work	.642 ***	.623 ***	.517 ***	-.596 ***	-.181
3 Safety and security	.617 ***	.515 ***	.522 ***	-.597 ***	-.333 *
4 Benefits	.306	.198	.325	-.349 *	-.397 *
5 Autonomy	.604 ***	.572 ***	.307	-.235	-.041
6 Increasing responsibilities	.576 ***	.552 ***	.272	-.213	-.252

Pearson correlation (n varies from 27 to 51): * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Perceptions of the psychological contract varied with seniority (Table 27). Middle managers responded that they had been made more employment promises by their employer than senior managers or workers. Middle managers also perceived that their employer’s promises had been fulfilled less than senior managers or workers.

Table 27 Psychological contract perceptions by seniority (n varies from 35 to 46)

Psychological contract component	Senior managers	Middle managers	Workers	Significance of difference (F test)
Training and development				
Mean number of promises made (out of 8)	3.3	3.2	3.9	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.5	3.8	4.3	ns (p=0.13)
Enabling good work				
Mean number of promises made (out of 5)	3.0	2.4	3.4	ns (p=0.19)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.8	4.2	4.6	ns (p=0.19)
Safety and security				
Mean number of promises made (out of 4)	3.5	2.4	2.6	ns (p=0.24)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.8 ab	4.2 b	4.8 a	* (p=0.04)
Benefits				
Mean number of promises made (out of 3)	0.7 ab	1.0 a	0.4 b	* (p=0.02)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	5.0	4.3	4.8	ns
Autonomy				
Mean number of promises made (out of 2)	1.7 a	1.4 a	0.8b	* (p=0.04)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.2	3.7	4.3	ns
Increasing responsibilities				
Mean number of promises made (out of 1)	0.7	0.7	0.9	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	5.0	4.0	3.9	ns
Total				
Mean number of promises made (out of 23)	12.8	11.1	11.9	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.7	4.0	4.4	ns (p=0.13)

Values with different letters appended are significantly different from others in the same row (LSD, p<0.05)

Overall, large scale employers made more promises to employees than small scale employers and fulfilled their promises to a greater extent (Table 28). This difference was particularly noticeable for training and development.

Table 28 Psychological contract perceptions by business size (n varies from 35 to 46)

Psychological contract component	Up to 20 employees	More than 20 employees	Significance of difference (F test)
Training and development			
Mean number of promises made (out of 8)	2.4	4.1	* (p=0.03)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	3.7	4.3	* (p=0.05)
Enabling good work			
Mean number of promises made (out of 5)	2.1	3.1	* (p=0.05)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.2	4.5	ns (p=0.22)
Safety and security			
Mean number of promises made (out of 4)	2.5	2.6	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.3	4.6	ns (p=0.20)
Benefits			
Mean number of promises made (out of 3)	0.7	0.8	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.5	4.7	ns
Autonomy			
Mean number of promises made (out of 2)	1.3	1.2	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	3.9	4.3	ns (p=0.25)
Increasing responsibilities			
Mean number of promises made (out of 1)	0.7	0.7	ns
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	3.8	4.2	ns
Total			
Mean number of promises made (out of 23)	9.7	12.6	ns (p=0.09)
Mean extent of promise fulfilment (scale 1–5)	4.0	4.4	ns (p=0.10)

Values with different letters appended are significantly different from others in the same row (LSD, $p < 0.05$)

4.5 Employee retention

We asked employees to describe the most important thing that would encourage them to continue or discourage them from continuing to work in the fruit industry. Thirty-nine respondents answered the encouragement question and thirty-four respondents answered the discouragement question.

There were two main themes in the comments. One was a generally positive description of the fruit industry as one with challenges and opportunities for growth in an industry where they just liked working. The other theme was more prosaic, describing a desire to be paid adequately for the work they did and be treated well by their employer.

Some respondents described the opportunities for growth and challenge provided by the fruit industry. An example of the challenge was “Finding other ways to sustain competitive advantage and discover points of differentiation are exciting concepts”. Also “I enjoy the challenges as each season is different”. Another benefit mentioned was “The portability of skills in the Fruit Industry”. The outdoor nature of the work and its reliance on nature was also mentioned, for example “Like to work outside [in the] environment with nature and trees” and “Mother Nature being good”. Comments reflecting a liking for the fruit industry or commitment to working in it included “The diversity of the job (changing tasks as the season progresses)” and “Food is the future of Australia”.

Other respondents mentioned the conditions of their employment. Some comments were about being paid enough, considering the work that was performed, for example, “Realistic wages for what is asked of you”. Another example of this sentiment is “I had not really thought about not working in horticulture but if the pay did not keep up then I would have to look elsewhere to support my family”. Some employees described the importance of being treated well by their employer. One was effusive in their praise: “My managers/owners of the company I work for go above and beyond for me. They are a delight to work for”. There were also some instrumental comments, such as “As long as the boss is good to work for I’m happy staying. A job is a job, it helps pay the bills”.

5 Discussion

Summary

Psychological contract theory was a useful approach for revealing factors influencing retention.

It is important to get the basics right to attract and retain staff. Those attracted to the industry for practical reasons (e.g. local, money) were just as likely to be retained as those who entered due to enthusiasm for the industry. As well practical factors related to “Safety and security” and “Enabling good work” were the biggest contributors to the intention to stay with an employer.

Focusing on developing staff is good for business, but it needs to be the right development. “Training and opportunity” was a major contributor to the intention to stay with an employer. As well, staff were retained longer when they experienced a promotion (which implies development). There are differences regarding the desired form of development, with informal training valued by all employees and formal training valued more by managers.

The challenge of middle management is real and requires an industry response so role expectations are clear. Middle managers had lower levels of job satisfaction than did senior managers and workers, and their work hours were as long as those of senior managers, even though they received a lot less pay. Despite this, middle managers were no less committed to their employer.

Smaller businesses face the greatest challenge. Their managers had the lowest job satisfaction and their employees were the most likely to leave. Small businesses will find it difficult to meet these challenges alone, and there is a role for industry in working with small businesses to develop industry-wide solutions.

5.1 Usefulness of Psychological Contract Theory

Psychological contract theory was useful in revealing factors that influence retention of employees in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry.

For our fruit industry respondents, promise fulfilment in the psychological contract is generally high. For all promises the mean fulfilment score is more than 4.0. This is much higher than in Kickul’s (2001) study of small businesses, where none of the mean fulfilment scores were more than 3.0 on a comparable scale. In their study of dairy farm workers, Ford et al. (2018) used a slightly different 4-point scale with all points labelled, so direct comparison with that study is difficult, but all their mean fulfilment scores were more than 3.0 on the 4-point scale, suggesting comparably high fulfilment scores to this study.

The fact that the promise variables do not arrange themselves in the same way as in the Kickul (2001) study, combined with the higher fulfilment scores in this study, suggests that the fruit industry might not be the same as other industries. Kickul’s respondents were all university students, who may have different characteristics from farm employees. The high fulfilment scores in the Ford et al. (2018) study of dairy farm employees suggest that farm employees might have different characteristics, and hence respond to questions differently from employees in other industries.

A further possibility is sampling bias. Although the demographic profile of the sample was broadly similar to that of the population, the small size of the sample and the fact that respondents could self-select makes it possible that the attitudes of the sample were not representative of those of the population. A truly random sample would be needed to be confident the findings from the survey sample accurately predict the characteristics of the population of fruit industry employees in the Goulburn-Murray.

5.2 Biggest contributors to retention in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry

Analysis of the correlations in the psychological contract data identifies the categories of promises that are most negatively correlated with intention to leave an employer (Table 26). Fulfilling promises in these areas will contribute to making employees less likely to leave their employer, and hence may improve employee retention. Within the fruit industry model, the biggest psychological contract contributors to intention to not leave one’s employer are “Safety and security” and “Enabling good work”. “Training and opportunity” is the next largest contributor, followed by “Benefits”. “Autonomy” and “Increasing responsibilities” appears to be much less important than meeting employees’ basic needs (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Hierarchy of psychological contract factors contributing to an intention to stay with an employer in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry.

It is difficult to compare the results of this study with those of Nettle et al. (2011) because the psychological contract variables in this study were structured differently from those in Nettle et al. We can, however, compare findings from this study using Kickul’s (2001) arrangement of variables (as reported in Appendix D) with those of Nettle et al.’s study (which also used the Kickul arrangement). In this study, “Job security and work arrangements” had the strongest negative correlation with intention to leave the employer, followed by “Benefits”. In contrast, in Nettle et al. (2011), “Autonomy and growth” had the strongest negative correlation with intention to leave the employer, followed by “Work facilitation”. Both Nettle et al. (2011) and the present study were hampered by low respondent numbers, and a more comprehensive study would be needed to ascertain reasons for the difference.

The psychological contract model also includes the intermediate measures of “Job satisfaction” and “Organisational commitment”. Both these are highly (negatively) correlated with intention to leave employer. All the psychological contract variables except “Benefits” are highly correlated with “Job satisfaction”. The one most highly correlated is “Training and opportunity”, followed by “Enabling good work”. All the psychological contract variables except “Benefits” are highly correlated with “Organisational commitment”. The one most highly correlated is “Enabling good work”, followed by “Training and

opportunity". The high correlations of "Enabling good work" and "Training and opportunity" to both "Job satisfaction" and "Organisational commitment" reinforce the findings that "Enabling good work" and "Training and opportunity" are linked to retention of staff.

"Safety and security" and "Enabling good work" matter the most

"Safety and security" and "Enabling good work" contributed the most to intention to stay with an employer. Both of these are relatively basic and fundamental needs, which psychological theory suggests must be met before a person seeks to fulfil higher-order needs (Maslow 1943). This suggests fruit industry employers mostly need to focus on basic aspects of the employment relationship. This means things like offering a secure job, safe workplace and adequate pay, and providing what employees need to do their job.

This finding aligns with the findings on why individuals entered the fruit industry. More than half the respondents entered the fruit industry for pragmatic reasons. For many it was simply that there was a job available that met their needs. For some it was the family business. Despite not expressing an enthusiasm for or specific attraction to the fruit industry, their careers have not been harmed by this pragmatism. They stayed as long in the fruit industry as their industry-attracted colleagues, stayed as long in jobs, and reached similar levels of seniority.

Responses to the open-ended questions about retention reinforce these findings. As well as a theme around the opportunities and challenges of the fruit industry, there was also a theme around adequate remuneration and being treated well by the employer. Similar results were also found in the qualitative study summarised in Appendix A. These findings suggest that a successful career in the fruit industry does not require an employee to have a particular attraction to the industry. For employers, this means that it is possible to attract staff for reasons other than industry attractiveness and still retain such staff in the business and industry.

One component of "Safety and security" is a competitive salary. This has been shown to be a factor in employee retention (Nettle et al. 2011). Yet fewer than half the employees in this study said it had been promised to them, and fulfilment of this promise was lower than for most of the promises. There may well be a lack of clarity within the fruit industry as to what constitutes a competitive salary, which suggests there is an opportunity for the industry to be more transparent about salaries.

Fruit industry businesses can improve employee retention within their operations by focusing on good human resource management practices, with an immediate focus on improving the factors associated with "Safety and security" and "Enabling good work". As well, employers would do well to ensure they undertake two-way communication with employees regarding expectations for the role and the employer. This would enable the employer to identify and address the different individual needs of their employees. There is further evidence on this point in the qualitative study in Appendix A, which found that "A good relationship with the boss" was one of the most commonly-identified "pull" factors that encouraged employees to stick with their employer.

Santhanam-Martin and Cowan (2017) identified that Goulburn-Murray fruit industry employers who use position descriptions have found that their use helps to clarify role expectations for both the business and the employee. Yet, their use tended to be limited to larger businesses. Expanding the use of position descriptions could be a useful communication tool for ensuring employer and employee expectations are aligned.

The fruit industry as a whole could add value by working with training providers to develop a targeted human resource management training package for employers within the industry, as suggested by Nettle (2015). The fruit industry could also support improved human resource management through the provision of tools that can be used by businesses, such as clear checklists that provide some structure to discussions between employer and employee regarding expectations.

There are a number of ways that public policy intersects with the expectations regarding the employee-employer relationship (e.g., regulation through fair work laws; occupational health and safety; skilled-migration visas; labour hire licensing). This suggests that there could be benefits from Government working with industry to consider relevant challenges.

The importance of training and development

“Training and opportunity” is also a significant contributor to intention to not leave one’s employer within the fruit Industry model. This factor includes a range of aspects associated with personal and professional development.

Our earlier report identified frustration in some employers that they had invested in developing staff who then left the business (Santhanam-Martin and Cowan 2017). Yet this study has shown that “Training and opportunity” help retain staff and that employees stay longer at a fruit industry business when they are promoted.

Informal, on-the-job learning was seen by employees at all levels of seniority as the most important way to acquire the skills they needed to do their jobs. It was seen as no less important by managers than by workers. So employers should not neglect it. More formal training (whether linked to a qualification or not) was seen as more important by managers than by workers, suggesting that it is important for training managers. But it is still seen by managers as less important than informal on-the-job learning, so it needs to be a supplement to informal learning and not take the place of informal learning.

Formal education or training linked to a qualification was seen to be important only by employees in larger businesses (more than 20 employees). Also, middle managers in large firms had a higher level of education and training than middle managers in small firms. There are plenty of larger businesses in the industry, which suggests that qualifications are still an important part of the industry’s overall approach to meeting skills requirements.

Employee development implies increased job skills, which can be linked to promotion. The relatively low proportion of employees saying they were promised opportunities for promotion and advancement contrasts with our finding regarding the importance of receiving a promotion to retention in their previous position. This suggests employers and the fruit industry more generally may be underestimating the importance of promotion to employee retention. This is reinforced by the findings of the qualitative study in Appendix A, where all interviewees identified lack of a clear career path and promotion opportunities as a “push” factor that would discourage them from continuing in their current employment.

There can be a number of issues that influence development and promotion opportunities, such as differences in how skills are valued and awareness of current and future knowledge gaps in the business. Employers need to be explicit about the promotion opportunities for employees. As well, human resource planning may help employers consider current and future needs for their businesses, such as where development and growth in roles can be prioritised.

Employees at all levels have shown a preference for informal training over formal training. Informal training can take on multiple forms. As well, training reflects a continuum rather than a dichotomy (see Figure 3). There is an opportunity for industry to work with training providers to design employee training packages that prioritises more informal and applied training. Especially, there is an opportunity to develop a strategy for upskilling leading hands and supervisors to enable transition to more senior ‘decider’ roles that could incorporate formal and informal elements (e.g. mentoring).

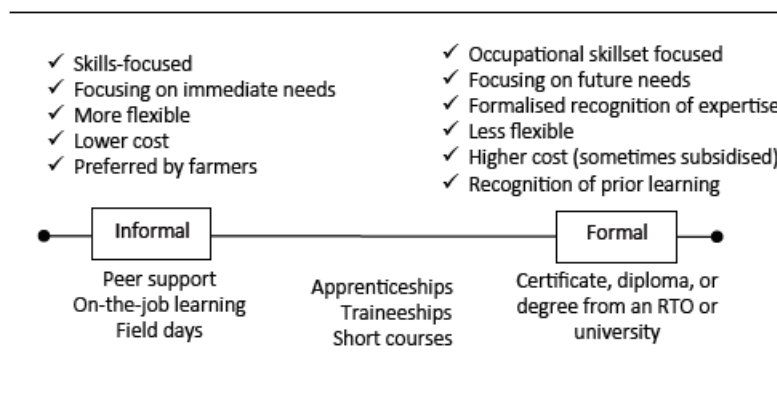


Figure 3 Common mechanisms and characteristics of skills development in agriculture (from Cowan 2015)

For policymakers and researchers there are other implications around training and development. Policymakers could consider how micro-credentialing might be used to help bridge the gap between informal and formal training. For researchers it would be useful to understand what aspects of the formal training are identified by employees as important, and to consider what is likely to change regarding formal training given the increasing use in agriculture of technology that requires specialist technical skills.

5.3 The challenge of middle management

Middle managers seem to be in a difficult position. They have lower levels of job satisfaction than people above and below them, yet their work hours are as long as those of senior managers with a lot less pay. (Long hours were also identified as a “push” factor by many of the interviewees in the qualitative study in Appendix A). Despite this squeeze, middle managers are no less committed to their organisation than other employees. Our earlier research with fruit industry employers identified aspects of middle management that presented a development challenge, particularly around the transition from being a ‘doer’ to being a ‘decider’ (Santhanam-Martin and Cowan 2017).

There is ambiguity in role definition for middle managers. The term “middle manager” covers a range of positions and roles. The role of an Assistant Manager in a small firm may be different from that of an Orchard Manager, Shed Manager or Office Manager in a large firm. If the fruit industry could develop a set of shared job titles and position descriptions, expectations on employees may be clearer. Agreed position descriptions could also clarify expectations of the transition from a supervisor or leading hand position to a manager position.

Industry could develop a strategy for upskilling leading hands and supervisors to enable transition to more senior ‘decider’ roles. This could include working with the training sector to design an employee training package that prioritises more informal and applied training (e.g. mentoring).

The pressure we have observed on middle managers in the Goulburn-Murray horticulture industry is not an isolated phenomenon. It can be seen as part of the internationally observed hollowing-out of the middle class (OECD 2011). There are challenges for industry, researchers and policymakers in identifying ways to manage these international trends within local industry contexts.

5.4 The challenge for small businesses

Small fruit industry businesses face the biggest challenge. Their employees have the highest scores regarding intention to leave their employer and the industry. Their managers have lower job satisfaction, had fewer promises made to them overall and scored lower on having their training and development promises kept. Further, small businesses are unlikely to be able to offer their employees the promotion opportunities available in large businesses.

Small businesses will find it difficult to manage these employment challenges on their own. Multiple small businesses may be able to work together to create career pathways for their employees rather than working in isolation. This might involve an employee having roles in multiple businesses across their career, or even at the same time.

The fruit industry may have a role in developing approaches to support small businesses in addressing these challenges. For example, it could work with small businesses to create collective development and training opportunities for employees. It could also develop human resource management training that targets the specific needs of small businesses.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The fruit industry would benefit from clear career pathways with the capability requirements of each position understood by both employees and employers. Employers need to link skills development to actual promotion opportunities and create opportunities for lower-level workers to aspire to and desire skills development. An industry training scheme that focuses on on-the-job training with more formal elements for more senior roles would receive broad support from employees. An industry-wide approach to skills development would mean that even if an employee left one business, they would be likely to stay in the industry and the benefits of their training would still be retained within the fruit industry.

The greatest challenge faced by the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry in managing its permanent workforce appears to be with middle managers in small firms. While large firms have their own middle management challenges, as larger businesses they have some ability to manage these challenges on their own. Small businesses are unlikely to be able to meet these challenges without help. There is a clear role for the fruit industry in working with small business to develop human resource management systems that provide employees with clear expectations, training opportunities and growth pathways.

6.2 Recommendations for individual employers

- Focus on good human resource management practices, with an immediate focus on getting the basic aspects of the employment relationship right. This means things like offering a secure job, safe workplace and adequate pay, and providing what employees need to do their job.
- Find out the needs of different employees and focus on them. For example, not everyone wants a promotion and the increased responsibilities associated with it.
- Remember that staff who enter the fruit industry for pragmatic reasons without any particular attraction to it are as likely to become competent and committed employees as those who enter with a love for the industry.
- Consider human resource planning to understand the current and future needs of your business, including where development and growth in roles can be prioritised. Specifically, consider ways to support interested leading hands and supervisors to transition towards management opportunities.
- Be explicit with employees about the promotion opportunities available in your business.
- Consider working together with other small businesses to create career pathways for employees, which could be across multiple businesses.

6.3 Recommendations for the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry

- With the training sector, develop a targeted human resource management training package for employers within the industry including some specialised content for small businesses. The training package may be able to utilise existing resources, such as those on the *People in Agriculture* website (<https://www.peopleinag.com.au/>).
- Work with training providers to design employee training packages that prioritises more informal and applied training. Especially, there is an opportunity to develop a strategy for upskilling leading hands and supervisors to enable transition to more senior 'decider' roles. This could incorporate formal and informal elements (e.g. mentoring).
- Work with businesses to develop position descriptions, to clarify expectations with employees. These position descriptions could potentially be shared across the regional industry with agree job titles and salary ranges, and could help clarify expectations of the transition from a supervisor or leading hand position to a manger position.
- Work with small businesses to create collective development and training opportunities for employees.

6.4 Recommendations for government

- Consider how vocational education and training (e.g. ‘free TAFE’ and microcredentialling) can be utilised to increase regional fruit industry engagement with the accredited training system.
- Work with industry to enable collective responses to managing workforce development needs, especially among small businesses.

Businesses in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry have consistently identified labour and skills shortages as critical constraints to business success and growth. This study has shown that employment conditions and human resource management practices influence employees’ job satisfaction and career intentions. The recommendations above are practical steps that can be taken towards addressing the challenges the industry faces in the attraction, retention and development of permanent employees for middle management roles.

This study does have some limitations. The sample size was small, which limits the statistical power of the analysis. Although there was a demographic spread among the respondents, they likely self-selected, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. The statistical modelling process necessarily simplifies complex phenomena to allow the questions to apply to all respondents. Nevertheless, useful findings have emerged.

Further research would enhance the value of this study. We have some suggestions:

- With much stronger industry support, an updated survey could be distributed more widely in the region or across other fruit production regions to develop more generalisable results.
- Case studies of small groups of fruit industry employers and employees could be used to understand in greater depth current human resource management practices and their effects on employees’ job experiences, job satisfaction and career intentions (leading to the identification of best practice and “what works” for retention and development).
- Action research collaboration with industry could be used to understand and improve processes for transitioning employees from “doing” (worker) to “deciding” (middle management) roles. This would involve structured support and mentoring for employees and managers, to maximise the success of this transition. If such an approach was successful, it would provide industry with skills to sustain this approach to talent development beyond the life of the initial research project.

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8 Appendix A Summary of qualitative study

University of Melbourne Master of Agricultural Sciences student Linjun Jing completed a minor research project in 2018 entitled “Understanding the career journeys of permanent employees in the Goulburn-Murray orchard industry”. This research was based on semi-structured interviews with a small sample (n=9) of permanent orchard employees in management roles. Interview research provides an opportunity to explore issues in greater depth and detail than is possible in a survey, and hence these data are a useful complement to the survey data. The research question that guided the project was: *What are the enablers and barriers to successful career paths for permanent employees in the Goulburn-Murray fruit industry?*

8.1 Methods

8.1.1 Data collection

The nine interviews were conducted in June and July 2018 with employees from three different orchard businesses. The job titles of the interviewees included General Manager (n=2), Orchard Manager (n=5), Operations Manager (n=1) and Project Manager (n=1). The interviews covered the following themes:

- Details and experiences of the current job;
- Career history in the fruit industry;
- Training and skills development; and
- Future career plans.

The duration of the interviews ranged from 16 minutes to 55 minutes, with most lasting around 30 minutes. The interviews were transcribed in full to facilitate analysis.

8.1.2 Data analysis

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). In particular, the analysis sought to identify for each interviewee both “pull” factors (aspects of their job that attracted them to stay in the job) and “push” factors (aspects of their job that they were dissatisfied with and caused them to consider changing job or industries). Analysis also included constructing a career history for each employee.

8.2 Results

8.2.1 “Pull” factors

Interviewees identified the following “pull” factors that attracted them to remain in their current position:

- Personal interest in and liking for the type of work
- Job satisfaction
- Relationship with boss: an enjoyable relationship with upper-level manager and the owner of the company
- Pay and benefits: satisfactory pay rates for what they are doing with extra bonus such as accommodation and company car
- Working with new technology
- Security: a stable lifestyle with a standard salary and experienced job skills
- Opportunities for career development
- A pleasant work environment, such as lunch areas
- Flexible work hours

- Work and family life balance

Of these, the three most commonly mentioned were personal interest, job satisfaction and the relationship with the boss:

Personal interest

All interviewees started working in the fruit growing industry when they were under 20 years old. None had attended university. In order to support their own livings, they began picking fruits at a starter. Indeed, some were influenced by the family since they have their own farms, and some happened to find the job in this industry. No matter why they entered in this industry, they ended up finding it to be an enjoyable work environment and lifestyle. After a few years in the position of orchard hands, all of them were promoted to management positions.

We had orchards. We shut the shed down. We still had orchards...I wanted to be in the shed, one, with machinery, two, with people. It was a job I enjoyed.

Interview 1

Job satisfaction

Orchard managers undertake diverse work activities every day and often deal with urgent situations, such as weather conditions. Some interviewees reported that they enjoy dealing with different duties. No matter how harsh the weather conditions are, those managers could be satisfied through the final good-quality fruits. Meanwhile, managers need to deal with different types of pickers, particularly in harvesting seasons. And they will feel fulfillment when they organise their team as their expectations. Furthermore, positive feedback from boss is a signal to prove their efforts even though they did not receive the feedback frequently.

It's rewarding knowing that you can get - you're getting a top-quality product.

Interview 2

Relationship with boss

Most of interviewees mentioned the good relationship they had with their boss. Managers who immigrated to Australia pay more attention on how well they get along with the boss, and how the employer comments on them. Managers who originally come from Australia and have been working in the fruit growing industry for many years are happy with their autonomy and the good, open relationship they have with their boss. Some even claimed that they might not want to continue in their current position if their boss left.

That all works in with the relationship with the boss. I don't think I could go to any other orchard and do what I do here.

Interview 7

8.2.2 “Push” factors

Almost half of the interviewees are satisfied with their current job and did not comment negative experiences at work. For those who did share negative experiences, these were the most common themes:

- Long working hours and lack of work-life balance
- Poor work conditions
- Lack of career development and promotion opportunities
- Pay and benefits

Long working hours

Not all the interviewees complained about excessive work hours. This may be because they have already worked in the orchard industry for many years and have come to accept this is part of the job. However, in terms of the barriers to retaining workers in the orchard industry, long hours ranks as the top reason identified in this study, because some of interviewees complained about the excessive work hours. This may lead to significant influence on their family life and their physical and mental health.

What I don't like? Hours. Probably the hours. It can be long hours.

Interview 1

Yeah, it can be quite difficult at times when you're working every single day or you're leaving for work in the summer at five o'clock in the morning and not getting home until six o'clock at night.

Interview 2

Career development

All interviewees claimed that the company did not design the career pathways for them when they entered into the company, and they were not informed by a clear job description of their job titles. After working with the company for years, they could not see a clear picture of the next step. The orchard manager or operation manager suggested that the next step for them is to be a general manager. However, they could not take the position of a general manager until the current general managers leave or retire.

I guess with inside the company, there really are not at the moment too many for me, personally other opportunities. I mean, obviously, I've spoken about that - like I said, I'm probably leaving before too long. There's not much else I can really do here.

Interview 4

Work Environment

Work environment relates to the physical geographical location, particular in the agriculture industry. Workers need to tolerate the hot temperature, the extreme weather, and the surroundings of the field, such as flies around.

The only thing I don't like is flies. In the summer, the flies... that's the worst thing. Other than that, the temperature, the heat, that's - yeah.

Interview 9

Pay and benefits

Most of interviewees were satisfied with their current salary and other benefits, such as accommodation, company car, phone bill, etc. However, a few interviewees claimed that the payment could be increased comparing to the average level in the industry.

How about pay and the benefits?" "It [pay and benefits] can be better. Which I think might be the deal breaker in years to come, if it doesn't improve. For what I do or what- for what I put in and what I get, is a big difference.

Interview 3

8.2.3 Career histories

Seven out of nine interviewees were recruited initially as a fruit picker, then promoted to orchard supervisor or manager assistant, finally becoming an orchard manager or operations manager. This is

evidence of the operational of an internal recruitment pathway: senior positions were filled by promoting employees already in the business. Only two out of nine interviewees were recruited through external recruitment. This confirms the finding of the 2016 research with employers (Santhanam-Martin and Cowan 2017) that internal recruitment is the preferred pathway for employers to fill more senior positions, and reinforced the importance of staff retention.

9 Appendix B: Questionnaire instrument

UNDERSTANDING THE CAREER JOURNEYS OF EMPLOYEES IN THE GOULBURN-MURRAY ORCHARD INDUSTRY

In this survey we are interested to learn more about the career experiences of employees (salary and wage earners) in the fruit growing industry in the Goulburn-Murray region, including the City of Greater Shepparton, Moira Shire, Campaspe Shire and Strathbogie Shire.

Q.1. Do you work for a business in the Goulburn-Murray region that grows and/or stores and/or packs fruit?

Yes

No

If you selected 'No' here we don't have any further questions for you. Thank you for your interest in participating in this research.

Q.2. Which statement below best describes your work?

I work as a seasonal labourer only

My work is not seasonal labour only

If you selected 'Yes' here we don't have any further questions for you. Thank you for your interest in participating in this research.

Q.3. What is the basis of your employment? (If you are employed differently in different jobs, please answer for what you consider to be your main job).

1. Contributing family member in a family business (paid by salary/wages)

2. Non-family employee (paid salary or wages)

3. Business owner

4. Contributing family member in a family business (paid by profit share or other allowance, not salary/wages)

5. Employee of a contracting or labour hire business, working at only ONE fruit business (paid salary or wages)

6. Employee of a contracting or labour hire business, working at MULTIPLE fruit businesses (paid salary or wages)

7. Self-employed contractor (paid by invoice)

8. Other (specify _____)

If you selected 1, 2 or 5 then please complete the survey.

If you did not select 1, 2 or 5 then we don't have any further questions for you. Thank you for your interest in participating in this research.

The next set of questions are about your previous work history in the fruit industry

Q.4. In what year did you first work in paid employment in the fruit industry (including seasonal work)?
(a rough estimate is fine if you can't remember the exact year).

Q.5. What initially attracted you to work in the fruit industry?

Q.6. Since you first worked in the industry, how much of your working life has been in the fruit industry?
Please tick one box only.

- Main industry of employment almost all the time
- Main industry of employment more than half the time
- Main industry of employment about half the time
- Main industry of employment less than half the time
- Main industry of employment only occasionally or for short periods
- Unsure/don't know

The next set of questions is about your last employer (the employer before your current employer)

Q.7. Was that employer involved in the fruit industry? (growing and/or storing and packing).

- Yes – Please go to Q.8.
- No – Please go to Q.12.
- Not applicable (no previous job) – Please go to Q.12.

Q.8. How long did you work for the employer? _____ years

Q.9. Did you go through a change in role or job title while you were with that employer?

- Yes
- No– Please go to Q.11.

Q.10. Did you consider the role or job title change to be a promotion or career advancement?

- Yes
- No

Q.11. Why did you leave the employer?

The next set of questions is about the employer you had before your last employer (two employers ago)

Q.12. Was that employer involved in the fruit industry? (growing and/or storing and packing).

Yes – Please go to Q.13.

No – Please go to Q.17.

Not applicable (no previous job) – Please go to Q.17.

Q.13. How long did you work for the employer? _____ years

Q.14. Did you go through a change in role or job title while you were with the employer?

Yes

No – Please go to Q.16.

Q.15. Did you consider the role or title change to be a promotion or career advancement?

Yes

No

Q.16. Why did you leave the employer?

The next set of questions are about your **CURRENT JOB** in the fruit industry. If you have more than one job then answer the questions for what you consider to be your main job.

Q.17. How long have you been working for your current main employer?: _____ years

Q.18. What is the basis of your employment?

- On-going or fixed term, full time (including paid leave)
- On-going or fixed term, part time (including paid leave)
- Casual (no paid leave)
- Other (specify _____)

Q.19. What is the nearest town or locality to the main site where you work? _____

Q.20. Thinking of your current main employer, what types of activities are performed by the business as a whole? **Please tick all that apply.**

- Growing fruit
- Storing fruit grown by the business
- Storing fruit from other growers
- Packing fruit grown by the business
- Packing fruit from other growers
- Transporting fruit to customers/markets
- Other (specify _____)

Q.21. What is the total area of orchards owned or leased by your current employer? (an estimate is fine)

- Less than 50 hectares (less than 125 acres)
- 50 – 99 hectares (125 – 250 acres)
- 100 – 199 hectares (250 – 500 acres)
- 200 – 399 hectares (500 – 1000 acres)
- More than 400 hectares (more than 1000 acres)
- Not sure

Q.22. Across all areas of their business, approximately how many employees does your current employer have (excluding seasonal labourers and contractors)? (an estimate is fine)

- Just me
- 2 – 4 employees including me
- 5 – 10 employees including me
- 11 – 20 employees including me
- More than 20 employees including me
- Not sure

Q.23. How many hours a week do you usually work for your main employer?

Q.24. How many hours a week do you work for your main employer at the busiest time of the year?

Q.25. Over a full year, how much of your work time do you spend working in each different area of your employer's business?

Task	None	A little	Some	Most	All	Not Applicable
Growing fruit	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Storing and/or packing fruit	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Transporting fruit	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Office work/administration	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Other (specify): _____	1	2	3	4	5	n/a

Q.26. What is your position or job title? (If you are unsure, please choose the title that you think best fits your job). **Please tick one box only.**

- General manager
- Manager (e.g. shed manager, orchard manager or office manager)
- Assistant manager
- Supervisor or leading hand
- Orchard hand or shed/packing hand
- A non-managerial administration role (e.g. bookkeeping or payroll)
- Other (specify _____)

Q.27. How many other employees report to you (directly OR indirectly, but excluding seasonals and contractors)?

Q.28. What is your gross income from your main job (before income tax has been deducted, and excluding superannuation)? **Please tick one box only.**

- Up to \$10,399 per year (Up to \$199 per week)
- \$10,400 - \$20,799 per year (\$200 - \$399 per week)
- \$20,800 - \$31,199 per year (\$400 - \$599 per week)
- \$31,200 - \$41,599 per year (\$600 - \$799 per week)
- \$41,600 - \$51,999 per year (\$800 - \$999 per week)
- \$52,000 - \$77,999 per year (\$1,000 - \$1,499 per week)
- \$78,000 - \$103,999 per year (\$1,500 - \$1,999 per week)
- \$104,000 - \$155,999 per year (\$2,000 - \$2,999 per week)
- \$156,000 or more per year (\$3,000 or more per week)
- Prefer not to say

Q.29. Does your employer provide you with any of the following additional employment benefits?

Please tick all that apply.

- Mobile phone which can be used for personal calls
- Company vehicle available for private use
- Laptop or tablet computer
- Subsidised accommodation
- Free accommodation
- Financial bonus(es)
- Additional paid leave (in addition to the standard 4 weeks)
- Other (specify _____)
- None

The next set of questions is about your education and training.

Q.30. What is the highest level of educational qualification you've completed? **Please tick one box only.**

- A postgraduate degree (e.g. Masters or PhD)
- A Bachelor degree
- A trade qualification, Certificate or Diploma from a TAFE or Registered Training Organisation
- Secondary School Year 12 (VCE)
- Secondary School Year 12 (VCAL)
- Secondary School Year 11
- Secondary School Year 10
- Secondary School Year below 10
- Other (specify _____)

Q.31. If you have a post-secondary qualification what is the name of this qualification, and what field is it in (e.g. Bachelor of Science in Botany, or Certificate III in Business Administration)?

Q.32. What is the highest level of qualification you hold that is related to agriculture or horticulture?

Please tick one box only.

- A postgraduate degree (e.g. Masters or PhD)
- A Bachelor degree
- A trade qualification, Certificate or Diploma from a TAFE or Registered Training Organisation
- Other (specify _____)
- No formal qualification in agriculture or horticulture

Q.33. Thinking about the knowledge and skills you require to do your current job, how much have **each** of the following types of training contributed to your skills and knowledge? Give your answer on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 represents "no contribution" and 5 represents "major contribution"

	No contribution				Major contribution		Not Applicable
Education or training that is <u>linked to a qualification</u> (degree, diplomas, certificates)	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Other training or professional development that is <u>not linked to a qualification</u> (e.g. workshops, field days, in-service training)	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Informal on-the-job learning	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	

The next set of questions relate to your experiences of your current job.

Q.34. How much do you agree or disagree with **each** of the following statements about your current job? Please consider each statement as a whole and give one response for each statement. Use a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
My opinion of myself goes up when I do this job well.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well.	1	2	3	4	5
I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a feeling of accomplishment when I am doing my job.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the amount of challenge in my job.	1	2	3	4	5

The next set of questions refer to the promises or commitments that your current employer has made to you about what conditions and benefits you can expect to receive in your job. These commitments may be formal or informal, in writing or verbal. We are not asking what you think your employer should provide to you. We are interested in what your employer has promised or committed to provide to you.

Q.35. Please read through the list and select **each** item that your employer has promised or committed to provide you. **Please tick all that apply.**

- Freedom over how the job is done
- Career guidance and mentoring
- Participation in decision-making
- Increasing responsibilities
- Opportunity to develop new skills
- Challenging and interesting work
- Recognition of my accomplishments
- Meaningful work
- Opportunities for personal growth
- Off-site training during work hours
- On the job training
- Opportunities for promotion and advancement
- Job security
- Well-defined job responsibilities
- A reasonable workload
- Paid annual holidays
- Competitive salary
- Cost of living benefits (e.g. discounted rent, farm produce)
- Lifestyle benefits (e.g. pleasant living environment)
- Safe work environment
- Enough resources to do the job
- Adequate equipment to perform the job
- A pleasant working environment

Q.36. Please indicate how well your employer has fulfilled the promises or commitment you have selected in Q.35. Use a scale from 1 (not fulfilled at all) to 5 (completely fulfilled.)

	Not fulfilled at all				Completely fulfilled	Not Applicable
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Freedom over how the job is done	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Career guidance and mentoring	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Participation in decision-making	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Increasing responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Opportunity to develop new skills	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Challenging and interesting work	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Recognition of my accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Meaningful work	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Opportunities for personal growth	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Off-site training during work hours	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
On the job training	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Opportunities for promotion and advancement	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Job security	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Well-defined job responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
A reasonable workload	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Paid annual holidays	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Competitive salary	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Cost of living benefits (e.g. discounted rent, farm produce)	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Lifestyle benefits (e.g. pleasant living environment)	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Safe work environment	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Enough resources to do the job	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
Adequate equipment to perform the job	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
A pleasant working environment	1	2	3	4	5	n/a

The final set of questions asks about your future intentions regarding your career in the fruit industry

Q.37. To what extent do you agree or disagree with **each** of the following statements about your career with the organisation you currently work for? Use a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I am keen to progress my career with this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel that I owe my organisation quite a bit because of what it has done for me.	1	2	3	4	5	
It would be hard for me to leave this organisation right now, even if I wanted to.	1	2	3	4	5	
I would not leave my employer right now because I have a sense of obligation to them.	1	2	3	4	5	
I would like a promotion with this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel "emotionally attached" to this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
I'm likely to search for a job with another employer.	1	2	3	4	5	
I can see a career for me with this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
I often think about leaving my current employer.	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel I have very few options to consider leaving this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
I want to take on more responsibilities with this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	
This organisation has a great deal of meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5	
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this employer.	1	2	3	4	5	
I think a long-term job with the same employer is important.	1	2	3	4	5	
If I quit now, it would be hard to find a comparable job.	1	2	3	4	5	

Q.38. To what extent do you agree or disagree with **each** of the following statements about your career in the fruit industry? Use a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working in the fruit industry.	1	2	3	4	5
I am keen to progress my career in the fruit industry.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm likely to search for a job in another industry.	1	2	3	4	5
I think about leaving the fruit industry.	1	2	3	4	5
I can see a career for myself in the fruit industry.	1	2	3	4	5

Q.39. What is the single most important thing that would encourage you to continue working in the fruit industry?

Q.40. What is the single most important thing that would discourage you from continuing to work in the fruit industry?

And finally, just 3 more questions about you.

Q.41. How old are you? **Please tick one box only.**

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60–69
- 70–79
- 80+

Q.42. Are you

- Male
- Female
- Do not identify as male or female
- Prefer not to say

Q.43. Where are you completing this survey?

- At home
- At work
- Somewhere else

Prize draw

If you would like to go into the draw to win one of 5 \$100 Visa gift cards, please provide your contact details below. Contact details that you provide here will be separated from your survey responses at the data analysis stage, so that your survey responses remain anonymous.

Name: _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Are you willing to participate in further research about fruit industry careers? If you answer Yes to this question we will retain you're the contact details provided above and may contact you again within the next 5 years. If you answer No, we will destroy your contact details immediately after the prize draw.

- Yes I am willing to be contacted in the future
- No do not contact me again

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Look out for information about the survey results at fruit industry events and in fruit industry publications later in 2018.

10 Appendix C: Further information about the survey questions

10.1 Groupings of variables

Job satisfaction (Question 34)

These items were based on those used by Nettle *et al.* (2011) and modified by the project team. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The job satisfaction variable was created by averaging the values of all the variables in the list for which an individual provided a response ($\alpha=0.911$).¹

My opinion of myself goes up when I do this job well
 Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job
 I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this work
 I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job
 I have a feeling of accomplishment when I am doing my job
 Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the amount of challenge in my job

Organisational commitment (Question 37)

These variables are based on those described by Jaros (2007) and Bekker (2016). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The organisational commitment variable was created by averaging the values of all the variables in the list for which an individual provided a response ($\alpha=0.784$)

I feel “emotionally attached” to this organisation
 This organisation has a great deal of meaning for me
 I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this employer
 I feel that I owe my organisation quite a bit because of what it has done for me
 I would not leave my employer right now because I have a sense of obligation to them

The first three of these are Affective items from the original organisational commitment scale; the fourth and fifth are Normative items. Three Continuance items from the original scale were included in the survey but were excluded from the analysis because they did not correlate clearly with the affective and normative items.

Advancement intentions (Question 37)

This set of variables was developed by the project team. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The advancement intentions variable was created by averaging the values of all the variables in the list for which an individual provided a response ($\alpha=0.664$).

I am keen to progress my career with this organisation
 I want to take on more responsibilities with this organisation
 I would like a promotion with this organisation

Intention to leave employer (Question 37)

These variables were based on those used by Kickul (2001) and Nettle *et al.* (2011) and modified by the project team. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The intention to leave employer variable was

¹ Cronbach’s alpha is a measure of the internal consistency of a set of items, that is, how closely related the items are as a group. An alpha of 0.7 is good, an alpha of 0.9 is excellent.

created by averaging the values of all the variables in the list for which an individual provided a response (alpha=0.803).

I often think about leaving my current employer

I'm likely to search for a job with another employer

I think a long-term job with the same employer is important (reversed)

I can see a career for me with this organisation (reversed)

Intention to leave fruit industry

The original psychological contract model did not include intention to leave an industry entirely. The set of variables about intention to leave the fruit industry was developed by the project team, based on those already chosen to measure intention to leave the employer. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The intention to leave the fruit industry variable was created by averaging the values of all the variables in the list for which an individual provided a response (alpha=0.603).

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working in the fruit industry (reversed)

I'm likely to search for a job in another industry

I am keen to progress my career in the fruit industry (reversed)

10.2 Calculated variables

Seniority

Respondents were classified into three bands of seniority. General managers were classified as "Senior manager" (n=6). Managers, Assistant managers and Supervisors or leading hands were classified as "Middle managers" (n=34) and Hands and Administration workers were classified as "Worker" (n=14).

Years of experience in fruit industry

Respondents were asked the year they started working in the fruit industry. Elapsed years were calculated by subtracting this year from 2018.

11 Appendix D. Psychological contract models

11.1 Original Kickul model

11.1.1 Structure of the model

This model structure was presented in Kickul (2001).

Autonomy and Growth

Freedom over how the job is done
 Career guidance and mentoring
 Participation in decision-making
 Increasing responsibilities
 Opportunity to develop new skills
 Challenging and interesting work
 Recognition of my accomplishments
 Meaningful work

Rewards and Opportunities

Opportunities for personal growth
 Off-site training during work hours
 On the job training
 Opportunities for promotion and advancement

Job Security and Work Responsibilities

Job security
 Well-defined job responsibilities
 A reasonable workload

Benefits

Paid annual holidays
 Competitive salary
 Cost of living benefits (e.g. discounted rent, farm produce)
 Lifestyle benefits (e.g. pleasant living environment)

Work Facilitation

Safe work environment
 Enough resources to do the job
 Adequate equipment to perform the job
 A pleasant working environment

11.1.2 Correlations

Below is a table of correlations with the psychological contract variables as arranged by Kickul (2001). The column numbers across the top of the table refer to the variables as numbered in the first column and the body of the table contains the Pearson correlation coefficients for each pair of variables. For example row 1 column 9 is the correlation between “Autonomy and growth” and Intention to leave employer”, with a value of -0.402. The stars below each correlation coefficient indicate the statistical significance of the correlation, from no stars indicating not significant to three stars indicating highly significant.

All the psychological contract variables (Autonomy and growth, Rewards and opportunities, Job security and work responsibilities, Benefits, Work facilitation) were correlated positively and significantly with job satisfaction and organisational commitment, suggesting that a satisfactory psychological contract goes with job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Table 29).

The psychological contract variables, job satisfaction and organisational commitment were all correlated negatively and significantly with intention to leave the employer, suggesting that if an employee scores highly on these factors they are unlikely to leave their employer. Although the psychological contract variables, job satisfaction and organisational commitment were all correlated negatively with intention to leave the fruit industry, the correlations were weaker and fewer were significant, which suggests these factors are less likely to influence someone to leave the industry entirely than to leave their particular employer. The psychological contract variable most highly (negatively) correlated with intention to leave the employer was Job security and work responsibilities. Benefits and Work facilitation were also highly correlated. Autonomy and growth, and Rewards and opportunities, were less highly correlated.

Table 29 Correlations between variables in the psychological contract model and other selected variables (psychological contract variables arranged in the original Kickul classification)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Autonomy and growth	.651 ***	.679 ***	.225	.608 ***	.678 ***	.689 ***	.210	-.363 **	.034
2 Rewards and opportunities		.456 **	.002	.601 ***	.598 ***	.535 ***	.399 *	-.341 *	-.087
3 Job security and work responsibilities			.515 **	.689 ***	.726 ***	.557 ***	.464 **	-.631 ***	-.267
4 Benefits				.414 *	.390 *	.368 *	.472 **	-.455 **	-.456 **
5 Work facilitation					.501 ***	.505 ***	.464 ***	-.452 **	-.137
6 Job satisfaction						.431 **	.182	-.519 ***	-.152
7 Organisational commitment							.494 ***	-.648 ***	-.198
8 Advancement intention								-.232	-.366 **
9 Intention to leave employer									.318 *
10 Intention to leave industry									

Pearson correlation (n varies from 28 to 51): * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

11.2 Model used in this study

11.2.1 Structure of the model

Principal Components analysis showed the promise variables in this study were not arranged in the same way as in the Kickul (2001) study that was the basis for the model. We arrived at the following arrangement of variables following Principal Components analysis and manual examination of some of the variables. The table of correlations resulting from application of this model is presented in the body of the report.

Training and opportunity (alpha=0.761)

Career guidance and mentoring
 Opportunity to develop new skills
 Recognition of my accomplishments
 Meaningful work
 Opportunities for personal growth
 Off-site training during work hours
 On the job training
 Opportunities for promotion and advancement

Enabling good work (alpha=0.970)

Challenging and interesting work
 Well-defined job responsibilities
 A reasonable workload
 Enough resources to do the job
 Adequate equipment to perform the job

Safety and security (alpha=0.910)

Job security
 Competitive salary
 Safe work environment
 A pleasant working environment

Benefits (alpha not calculated because of small number of responses for some items)

Paid annual holidays
 Cost of living benefits (e.g. discounted rent, farm produce)
 Lifestyle benefits (e.g. pleasant living environment)

Autonomy (alpha=0.816)

Freedom over how the job is done
 Participation in decision-making

Increasing responsibilities (alpha not relevant for a single item)

Increasing responsibilities

11.2.2 Correlations

Below is the full table of correlations from the model used in this study (Table 30).

**Table 30 Correlations between variables in the psychological contract model and other selected variables
(psychological contract variables arranged according to the model used in this study)**

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Training and opportunity	.659 ***	.499 ***	.041	.717 ***	.749 ***	.743 ***	.603 ***	.259	-.402 **	-.030
2 Enabling good work		.820 ***	.286	.599 ***	.482 **	.642 ***	.623 ***	.517 ***	-.596 ***	-.181
3 Safety and security			.526 **	.664 ***	.325 *	.617 ***	.515 ***	.522 ***	-.597 ***	-.333 *
4 Benefits				.163	.041	.306	.198	.325	-.349 *	-.397 *
5 Autonomy					.570 **	.604 ***	.572 ***	.307	-.235	-.041
6 Increasing responsibilities						.576 ***	.552 ***	.272	-.213	-.252
7 Job satisfaction							.431 **	.182	-.519 ***	-.152
8 Organisational commitment								.494 ***	-.648 ***	-.198
9 Advancement intention									-.232	-.366 **
10 Intention to leave employer										.318 *
11 Intention to leave industry										

Pearson correlation (n varies from 27 to 51): * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

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