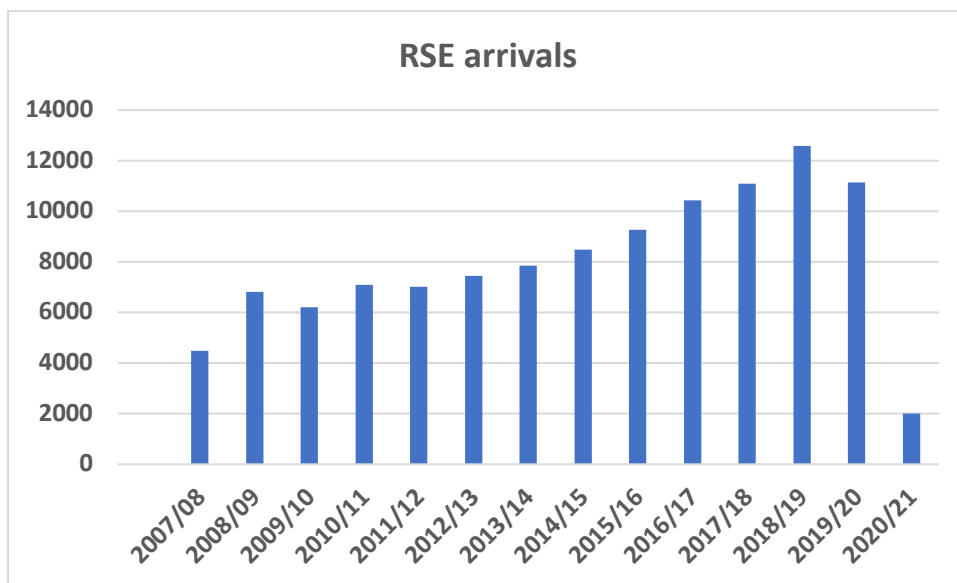


# Recruitment for the RSE Scheme, 2020/21: An exceptional year

Richard Bedford<sup>1</sup>

The arrival of 2,017 seasonal workers between mid-October 2020 and mid-March 2021 was the smallest recruitment for the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme during any financial year since the scheme was launched in 2007. The exceptional nature of this small recruitment can be seen very clearly in the graph below.



The COVID-19 pandemic that led governments in every country in the Pacific region to greatly restrict the flows of people across their international borders effectively terminated recruitment for the RSE scheme from March 19 2020 until early 2021. The first exception to the very strict border control maintained by the Government of New Zealand over flows of seasonal workers was in October 2020 when six Taiwanese tea pickers were granted RSE work visas to assist Zealong Tea Estate with their harvest.

A much more significant border exemption for RSE workers was between mid-January and mid-March 2021. This exemption, or BE 1 for short, allowed for just over 2,000 seasonal

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Richard Bedford is Emeritus Professor at the University of Waikato and the Auckland University of Technology. This report draws on unpublished information relating to visas issued to seasonal workers participating in New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. The data were provided by Michael Jones, Senior Adviser in the Pacific Migration Team in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Michael's assistance with my on-going research into the operation of the RSE scheme is greatly appreciated. The report is an unsolicited one, provided to MBIE in the spirit of reciprocity as an acknowledgement of the support provided by the Migration Pacific Team and the Toso Vaka o Manū Team for research on migration from the Pacific to New Zealand.

workers to be recruited from Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu. These recruits are the subject of this report which is organised into seven sections addressing the following questions:

1. Who were the RSE workers recruited during the 2020/21 financial year?
2. What was the previous work experience of the BE 1 recruits?
3. How many of the BE 1 recruits were also RSE workers in 2019/20?
4. How many of the BE 1 recruits were employed as RSE workers before 2019/20?
5. How were the BE 1 recruits distributed amongst the registered RSEs?
6. How many RSEs had joint ATR arrangements for their BE 1 recruits?
7. What was the regional distribution of the BE 1 recruits?

The report concludes with some brief reflections on what was an exceptional year for recruitment of RSE workers during the 2020/21 financial year.

### 1. Who were the RSE workers recruited during the 2020/21 financial year?

The MBIE database for FY 2020/21 contains 2,018 entries for five countries:

**Table 1: RSE workers arriving during the 2020/21 FY**

Nationality	Female	Male	Total	% female
Fiji	1	69	70	1.4
Samoa	16	759	775	2.1
<b>Taiwan</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Tuvalu</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Vanuatu	28	1138	1166	2.4
Total	45	1973	2018	2.2

The 6 Taiwanese in Table 1 arrived in October 2020 and went home in January 2021. They must have been the subject of a separate arrangement for specialist tea pickers. The 10 Taiwanese recruited by Zealong Estate in 2019/20 had all returned home before the border closed on 19 March 2020. They arrived in New Zealand on 24 October 2019 and left on 4 December 2019.

The one Tuvaluan was entered into the database on 15 April 2021 and left again on 15 April 2021. This is likely to be a miscoding of someone already in New Zealand who was getting a visa extension, rather than someone arriving under the BE 1 provisions. In the tables and discussion that follow only the 2,011 workers from Fiji (70), Samoa (775) and Vanuatu (1,166) are included. These workers all arrived between 17 January and 6 March 2021 and, as noted earlier, they are termed the BE 1 recruits.

### Gender breakdown

BE 1 recruitment was essentially a recruitment of men – only 45 (2.2 percent) of the 2,011 workers that arrived from the three Pacific sources were women. There was a slightly higher percentage (2.4%) of women amongst the ni-Vanuatu arrivals than was the case for Samoans (2.1%) and Fijians (1.6%). These are much lower percentages of women than were present in the 2019/20 arrivals, especially from Fiji (6.8%) and Vanuatu (9.9%). In 2019/20 2.8% of Samoan RSE arrivals were women. Of the 7,132 arrivals from these three countries in 2019/20, 519 (7.3%) were women.

### 2. What was the previous work experience of the BE 1 recruits?

A feature of the border exemption recruitment early in 2021 was the expectation that only experienced seasonal workers would be selected. Of the 2,011 workers who arrived between 17 January and 6 March, 2,002 had been employed as a seasonal worker in an earlier year (Table 2). Nine recruits (one from Samoa and eight from Vanuatu), highlighted below in red, were in their first year of employment as seasonal workers in the scheme. Two of the new recruits from Vanuatu were women. Two RSEs in the Bay of Plenty and one in Hawke's Bay had recruited these first season workers as part of larger teams from Vanuatu and Samoa.

**Table 2: First year of employment as an RSE worker, arrivals 2021**

Year started	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Total
2007/08		9	21	30
2008/09		27	50	77
2009/10		15	35	50
2010/11		21	30	51
2011/12		23	45	68
2012/13		22	66	88
2013/14		36	66	102
2014/15		35	62	97
2015/16	4	55	94	153
2016/17	17	92	119	228
2017/18	19	124	188	331
2018/19	24	175	242	441
2019/20	6	140	140	286
<b>2020/21</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
Total	70	775	1166	2011

Just over half (52.6%) of the recruits (1,058) had arrived for the first time during the three previous years, with the remaining 944 (excluding the 9 new workers in 2021), or 47% of the

total, having their first RSE work experience at some stage during the decade before 2017/18 (Table 2).

### *Number of seasons worked*

A more precise indication of the previous work experience of BE 1 recruits is given in Table 3. The great majority (72%) had been RSE workers for under five seasons with all 70 Fijians in this category. The “most experienced” of the three Pacific workforces, in terms of number of seasons employed by RSEs before 2021, were the ni-Vanuatu. Just under a third (32.5%) had been to New Zealand five or more times for seasonal work, compared with 23.6% of the Samoans and none of the Fijians (Table 3).

**Table 3: Number of seasons as an RSE employee before 2020/21**

Seasons before 2020/21	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Total
<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
1	27	207	314	548
2	19	173	202	394
3	18	118	153	289
4	6	93	110	209
5		40	85	125
6		30	72	102
7		32	73	105
8		17	49	66
9		23	38	61
10		15	29	44
11		15	19	34
12		8	13	21
13		3	1	4
Total	70	775	1166	2011
<b>Percentages</b>				
Under 5 years	100.0	76.4	67.5	<b>72.1</b>
5-9 years	0.0	<b>18.3</b>	<b>27.2</b>	22.8
10 years and over	0.0	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	5.1

There were only small differences between the 1,966 men and the 45 women recruits in terms of their previous seasonal work experience. The shares returning for under five seasons were 72.1% and 71.1% respectively. A higher share of the men (5.2%) had been employed for 10 or more seasons than the women (2.2%).

### 3. How many of the BE 1 recruits were also RSE workers in 2019/20?

Equal numbers (140) of Samoans and ni-Vanuatu had their first season as RSE workers during 2019/20 (Table 2). The great majority of these 286 recruits would have spent at least 10 months in RSE employment during 2019/20. But they are only a small share of the workers recruited in early 2021 who had returned after a break of between three and six months back at home. In fact, just under 60 percent (1,181) of the 2,011 BE 1 recruits from the three countries had been working in New Zealand during the previous year (Table 4).

**Table 4: BE 1 recruits employed in 2019/20**

Nationality	Female	Male	Total
<b>Numbers</b>			
Fiji	0	16	16
Samoa	8	579	587
Vanuatu	15	563	578
Total	23	1158	1181
<b>Percentages of all 2020/21 recruits</b>			
Fiji	0.0	23.2	<b>22.9</b>
Samoa	50.0	76.3	<b>75.7</b>
Vanuatu	53.6	49.5	<b>49.6</b>
Total	51.1	58.9	<b>58.7</b>
<b>Percentages with same employer</b>			
Fiji	0.0	50.0	50.0
Samoa	100.0	91.9	91.9
Vanuatu	100.0	88.3	88.6
Total	100.0	89.6	<b>89.8</b>
<b>Percentages in same region</b>			
Fiji	0.0	93.8	93.8
Samoa	100.0	94.5	94.5
Vanuatu	93.3	86.3	86.5
Total	95.7	90.6	<b>90.7</b>

The opportunity to recruit experienced workers, who had not had an extended period of employment in New Zealand after the border closed on 19 March 2020, was really only taken up by employers of Fijians. Of the 70 Fijians recruited under BE 1, under a quarter (22.9%) were returning after employment during the previous year. This compares with over three-quarters (75.7%) of the Samoan recruits and just under half (49.6%) and those from Vanuatu (Table 4).

The great majority of workers in 2019/20 who returned in 2021 had the same employer (89.9%) and were working in the same region (90.7%) in both years. Returning Samoans had the highest percentages with the same employer (91.9%) and region of employment (94.5%). Half of the Fijians had a different employer in 2021 from the one that was their primary RSE in 2019/20, but nearly all of them were working in the same region (93.8%). The ni-Vanuatu had slightly lower percentages with the same employer and region in both years (Table 4).

#### 4. How many of the BE 1 recruits were employed as RSE workers before 2019/20?

Significant percentages of BE 1 recruits were RSE seasonal workers in 2019/20 (58.7%), 2018/19 (78.1%), 2017/18 (56.6%) and in 2016/17 or earlier (47.0%). These percentages, which vary across the three suppliers of BE 1 workers, are highlighted in red in Table 5. Notwithstanding these differences between groups of recruits, the data in Table 5 indicate that there is considerable stability in terms of employer and region of employment in the RSE (percentages in blue and purple respectively).

**Table 5: Some features of the previous RSE seasonal employment of BE 1 recruits**

Year of previous RSE employment	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Total
Total number of BE 1 recruits	70	775	1166	2011
<b>2019/20</b>				
Number of 2021 recruits employed in 2019/20	16	587	578	1181
% of all 2021 recruits working for RSEs in 2019/20	<b>22.9</b>	<b>75.7</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>58.7</b>
% of 2019/20 returnees working with same employer	<b>50.0</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>88.6</b>	<b>89.8</b>
% of 2019/20 returnees working in same region	<b>93.8</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>90.7</b>
<b>2018/19</b>				
Number of 2021 recruits employed in 2018/19	63	575	932	1570
% of all 2021 recruits working for RSEs in 2018/19	<b>90.0</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>78.1</b>
% of 2018/19 returnees working with same employer	<b>65.1</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>69.0</b>	<b>74.2</b>
% of 2018/19 returnees working in same region	<b>74.6</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>78.5</b>

<b>2017/18</b>				
Number of 2021 recruits employed in 2017/18	40	405	694	1139
% of all 2021 recruits working for RSEs in 2017/18	<b>57.1</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>56.6</b>
% of 2017/18 returnees working with same employer	<b>47.5</b>	<b>81.7</b>	<b>65.3</b>	<b>70.5</b>
% of 2017/18 returnees working in same region	<b>82.5</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>79.2</b>
<b>Before 2017/18*</b>				
Number of 2021 recruits employed before 2017/18	21	336	589	946
% of all 2021 recruits working for RSEs before 2017/18	<b>30.0</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>47.0</b>
% of before 17/18 returnees working with same employer	<b>57.1</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>57.0</b>	<b>64.0</b>
% of before 17/18 returnees working in same region	<b>71.4</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>74.9</b>

\* The employer and the region before 2017/18 are the ones workers had in their most recent season of RSE work between 2007/08 and 2016/17.

There is a high level of retention in the RSE workforce with the great majority of returnees coming back to work for the same RSE employer or contractor. The percentages highlighted in blue in Table 5 refer to the shares of 2021 recruits employed in the specified earlier years who were working for the same employer/contractor in that year as well as 2021. The percentages in purple, which tend to be higher than those in blue, refer to the shares of recruits working in the same region in 2021 and in the specified year in Table 5.

## 5. How were the BE 1 recruits distributed amongst the registered RSEs?

Just under half (67) of the 132 RSEs that obtained seasonal workers from Pacific countries during the 2019/20 financial year received one or more BE 1 recruits. A summary of the distribution of the 2,011 workers, who arrived from Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu between mid-January and early March 2021, is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Distribution of BE 1 recruits across RSEs**

Groupings of workers	Numbers of		Percentages of	
	RSEs	Workers	RSEs	Workers
100 +	<b>4</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>37.9</b>
50-99	<b>7</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>25.0</b>
30-49	7	253	10.5	12.6
20-29	10	238	14.9	11.8
10-19	9	112	13.4	5.6
5-9	<b>17</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>
1-4	<b>13</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Total	67	2011	100.0	100.0

Four of the RSEs that regularly receive large numbers of seasonal workers (Mr Apple, Seasonal Solutions Co-operative, Turners and Growers NZ Ltd and Seeka Kiwifruit Industries), received just under 30 percent of the BE 1 recruits. Over 60% of the recruits (1,265) went to 11 (16.5 percent) of the 67 RSEs while, at the other end of the distribution, 45% of the RSEs shared just over 7% (143) of the recruits (Table 6). The median number of BE 1 workers across the 67 RSEs was 10.

There were some differences in the distributions of Fijians, Samoans and ni-Vanuatu across the RSEs (Table 7). The number of RSEs shown in Table 7 sums to more than 67 and that is because 12 of them had recruits from more than one country. These RSEs with multi-country workforces end up being counted in each source country's total number of RSEs. One RSE had workers from Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu; three had workers from Fiji and Vanuatu; and eight had workers from Samoa and Vanuatu. Three of the 67 RSEs just had workers from Fiji, 14 just from Samoa and 37 just from Vanuatu.

It is clear from Tables 6 and 7 that there is a lot of variability in the numbers of BE 1 recruits allocated to each RSE. However, the median number of recruits per RSE is small for all three sources – 10 in the case of Fijians, 11.5 for ni-Vanuatu and 18.5 for Samoans. While four RSEs received over 100 BE 1 workers each (and, in the case of three of these, over 200 each), three RSEs received one recruit each, and four more received two recruits each. Given the small size of the overall recruitment, these small numbers of workers per RSE are to be expected. The 2,011 recruits from Pacific sources for the 2020/21 financial year were the equivalent of only a fifth (19.6%) of the 10,238 RSE recruits from Pacific sources during the previous financial year.

**Table 7: Distribution of BE 1 recruits across RSEs, by source country**

Groupings of workers	Numbers of RSEs			Percentages of workers		
	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu
100 +		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>29.6</b>	<b>27.2</b>
50-99		3	4		31.6	24.8
30-49		2	5		8.3	14.5
20-29	1	4	7	38.6	12.2	15.1
10-19	1	7	9	15.7	12.5	10.5
5-9	4	6	10	44.3	5.5	5.3
1-4	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Total	7	24	50	100.0	100.0	100.0



### **Distribution of 2019/20 returnees across RSEs**

It has already been noted that just under 60% of the 2,011 BE 1 recruits had been employed as seasonal workers during 2019/20 (see Table 5). For over a third (24 or 35.8%) of the 67 RSEs, 100% of their BE 1 recruits had been working in New Zealand during the 2019/20 financial year (Table 8). Their 228 recruits comprised just under 20% of the 1,181 2019/20 returnees, and 11% of the total number recruited early in 2021 (Table 8).

Over 75% of the recruits for a further 15 RSEs (22.4%) were returnees (Table 8). When these RSEs are combined with those whose recruits were all returnees, just under 60% of the 67 RSEs are accounted for. Only 11 (16.4%) of the RSEs had no 2019/20 returnees amongst their BE 1 recruits. The great majority of RSEs had selected a significant share of their 2021 workers from returnees who had had between three and six months at best in residence back in their home countries before re-recruitment.

**Table 8: Distribution of returnees from 2019/20 across RSEs**

BE 1 recruits who are 2019/20 returnees (%)	No. of RSEs	2019/20 workers	All BE 1 recruits	% of RSEs	% 2019/20 workers	% all BE 1 recruits
100 percent	24	228	228	<b>35.8</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>
75-99 percent	15	661	720	22.4	56.0	35.8
40-74 percent	9	137	258	13.4	11.6	12.8
1-40 percent	8	155	615	11.9	13.1	30.6
None	11	0	190	16.4	0.0	9.5
Total	67	1181	2011	99.9	100.0	100.0

### **6. How many RSEs had joint ATR arrangements for their BE 1 recruits?**

Just under one quarter (474 or 23.5%) of the 2,011 BE 1 recruits were on joint ATRs (Table 9). A higher share (30.5%) of the Ni-Vanuatu workers had joint ATRs than was the case for Samoans (15.3%). None of the Fijian BE 1 recruits were on joint ATRs (Table 9).

The percentage of recruits on joint ATRs is surprisingly low, given that RSEs were encouraged to recruit workers for the maximum time permitted under the RSE work visa, and to share them with other RSEs where their seasonal requirements permitted. Some of the RSEs who often have seasonal workers from the Pacific on joint ATRs, like Mr Apple, had less than 5% of their 229 BE 1 recruits in this category. Some of the RSEs they regularly partner with had the relevant joint ATRs in 2021 (e.g. Thornhill Viticulture and Horticulture).

**Table 9: Single and joint ATRs for BE 1 recruits, by source country**

Nationality	Number of ATRs per recruit			Total
	One	Two	Three	
Fiji	70			70
Samoa	656	90	29	775
Tonga	811	319	36	1166
<b>Total</b>	<b>1537</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Percentages</b>				
Fiji	100.0			100.0
Samoa	84.7	<b>11.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	100.0
Tonga	69.5	<b>27.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Employers with joint ATRs**

Only 12 (18%) of the 67 RSEs had BE 1 recruits on joint ATRs. Four of the largest ones had more than 60% of these workers on joint ATRs. Two were contractors (Thornhill Viticulture Horticulture and Vinepower), and more than 90% of their recruits were on arrangements involving either two or three ATRs. Both contractors have seasonal labour supply arrangements with employers in more than one region, especially Marlborough and the Hawke’s Bay, and both received very similar numbers of RSE workers under the special border exemption arrangements (84 for Thornhill and 83 for Vinepower).

The other two RSEs with significant shares of workers on joint ATRs were Seasonal Solutions Co-operative (93%) and Turners and Growers NZ Ltd (61%). Seasonal Solutions has members of its co-operative in three South Island regions (Otago, Canterbury and Marlborough). The company also has arrangements for sharing workers with employers in the Hawke’s Bay and Bay of Plenty regions. Of their 208 BE 1 recruits, 194 were on joint ATRs.

Turners and Growers NZ Ltd has horticulture businesses in several regions and a significant part of their RSE workforce is shared between their business units given that the seasonal demands for labour vary with the crop(s) being grown in different parts of the country. Turners and Growers had the largest number (38) and proportion (34.5%) of their 110 BE 1 recruits who had employment arrangements involving three ATRs.

The only other RSEs who had workers with joint ATRs were Crasborn Fresh Fruit Harvest Ltd, Bostock NZ, Kelston Orchards, Pick Hawkes Bay, Vinecraft and Vine First.

### **Distribution of single and joint ATRs**

The distribution of RSEs and BE 1 recruits by the different combinations of ATRs is summarised in Table 10. All RSEs had recruits on single ATRs and 55 (82%) of them just had workers employed under one ATR. These single ATR workers accounted for 70.4% of the 2,011 BE 1 recruits.

**Table 10: Distribution of BE 1 recruits with single and joint ATRs**

Number of ATRs	No. of RSEs	Number of recruits		% of RSEs	% of workers	
		1 ATR	2/3 ATRs		1 ATR	2/3 ATRs
Only single ATRs	55	1052	0	<b>82.1</b>	<b>68.5</b>	0.0
Two ATRs (1+2)	9	<b>414</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>68.1</b>
Two ATRs (1+3)	1	23	6	1.5	1.5	1.3
Three ATRs (!+2+3)	2	48	145	3.0	3.1	<b>30.6</b>
Total	67	<b>1537</b>	<b>474</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0

A small number of RSEs (9 or 13.4%) had a mix of workers with single ATRs and joint (2) ATRs. Their single ATR workers (414) accounted for 27% of the 1,637 recruits with one ATR. Their workers with two ATRs (323) accounted for just over two-thirds of the 474 recruits who had joint ATRs (Table 10).

One RSE (Team Works Hawke’s Bay Ltd) had a mix of workers with single ATRs and joint (3) ATRs, while two RSEs (Turners and Growers NZ and Vinepower) had a mix of single and joint (2 as well as 3) ATRs. The joint ATR workers for the latter two RSEs accounted for just over 30% (145) of all the recruits (474) on joint ATRs.

### **7. What was the regional distribution of the BE 1 recruits?**

Three regions provided employment for 77% (1,554) of the BE 1 recruits -- Hawke’s Bay (pip fruit, 41.3%), Bay of Plenty (kiwifruit, 20.4%) and Marlborough (grapes, 15.5%). Harvesting and packing crops were the main jobs for 61% of the Fijians, 88% of the Samoans and 71% of the ni-Vanuatu who commenced work in these three regions between mid-January and mid-March 2021 (Table 11).

Two other South Island regions – Nelson and Otago – accounted for a further 16% of the 2,011 recruits, and most of the Fijians, Samoans and ni-Vanuatu employed in other parts of the country. Northland, Auckland and the Waikato regions, collectively, were the initial destinations for 5.7% of the recruits, while Gisborne, Canterbury and the Manawatu provided work for just over 1% or 22 workers.

**Table 11: Regional distribution of BE 1 recruits by source country**

Region	Source country			Row Total	
	Fiji	Samoa	Vanuatu	Number	Percent
<b><i>Top three regions</i></b>					
Hawkes Bay	6	511	314	831	<b>41.32</b>
Bay of Plenty	37	127	247	411	<b>20.44</b>
Marlborough		46	266	312	<b>15.51</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>1554</b>	<b>77.27</b>
% of row total	2.8	44.0	53.2	100.0	
% of column total	<b>61.4</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>70.9</b>	77.3	
<b><i>Other regions</i></b>					
Nelson	8	67	122	197	<b>9.80</b>
Otago	11		113	124	<b>6.17</b>
Northland		5	48	53	2.64
Auckland	8		28	36	1.79
Waikato			25	25	1.24
Gisborne		19		19	0.94
Canterbury			2	2	0.10
Manawatu			1	1	0.05
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>22.73</b>
% of row total	5.9	19.9	74.2	100.0	
% of column total	38.6	11.7	29.1	22.7	
Column total	70	775	1166	2011	100.00

Given that just over three-quarters of the recruits were on contracts covered by a single ATR, the regional distribution shown in Table 11 gives a fair representation of where most of the seasonal workers would be based while in New Zealand. However, the 23% of recruits employed on joint ATRs could expect to be employed in more than one region and/or with more than one employer during the course of their contracts.

#### ***Regional distribution of the 2019/20 returnees***

It has already been shown (Table 5) that the great majority of the recent returnees (RSE workers in 2019/20) were employed by the same RSE and were working in the same region in 2021. In Table 12, the co-incidence of the RSEs they had contracts with and the regions where they worked in the two years are presented in four groups (definitions below table).

**Table 12: Distribution of 2019/20 returnees by different employer/region combinations**

Region	Same region			Different region			All regions Total
	SESR	DESR	Sub-total	SEDR	DEDR	Sub-total	
Hawke's Bay	630	44	674	2	16	18	692
Marlborough	123	1	124	26	15	41	165
Nelson	145	1	146		2	2	148
Bay of Plenty	51	3	54		14	14	68
Otago	23	8	31	2	11	13	44
Northland	21		21	8	5	13	34
Other regions	20		20	9	1	10	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>1013</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>1181</b>
<i>Percent of regional total</i>							
Hawke's Bay	91.0	6.4	97.4	0.3	2.3	2.6	100.0
Marlborough	74.5	0.6	75.2	15.8	9.1	24.8	100.0
Nelson	<b>98.0</b>	0.7	98.6	0.0	1.4	1.4	100.0
Bay of Plenty	75.0	4.4	79.4	0.0	20.6	20.6	100.0
Otago	<b>52.3</b>	18.2	70.5	4.5	25.0	29.5	100.0
Northland	61.8	0.0	61.8	23.5	14.7	38.2	100.0
Other regions	66.7	0.0	66.7	30.0	3.3	33.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Employer/region groups:

- 1) same RSE, same region (SESR)
- 2) different RSE, same region (DESR)
- 3) same RSE, different region (SEDR)
- 4) different RSE, different region (DEDR)

There are some variations across the regions in terms of the shares of BE 1 recruits who were contracted by the same RSE and working in the same region in 2021 as they had been in 2019/20. Almost all (98%) of the 148 recruits in the Nelson (including Tasman District) region were with the same RSE. The lowest percentage in the SESR group was found in Otago (52.3%) and this is linked with the fact that the main RSE recruiting seasonal labour there, Seasonal Solutions Co-operative, has its operations in three regions in the South Island: Otago, Marlborough and Canterbury. Seasonal Solutions also shares workers, on joint ATRs, with several other RSEs.

The numbers and shares in the DESR (57, 4.8%), SEDR (47, 4.0%) and DEDR (64, 5.4%) groups are all small and roughly similar in total. However, there are differences between regions in these shares reflecting the multi-regional operations of some contractors (e.g. Vinepower and Thornhill in Marlborough) and growers and grower co-operatives (Turners and Growers NZ and Seasonal Solutions). There are also long-established joint ATR arrangements between certain growers and contractors (e.g. Crasborn Fresh Harvest in Hawke's Bay and Vinepower in Marlborough, Mr Apple in Hawke's Bay and Hortus in Marlborough) that contribute to the mix of shares in the four RSE/region combinations shown in Table 12.

## 8. Some reflections

The very limited opportunity during the 2020/21 financial year for RSEs to recruit seasonal labour from Pacific sources, as well as the Asian countries that a small number of RSEs have on-going labour hire arrangements with, will always be evident in the statistical record for the RSE scheme.

Late in 2019 the then Minister of Labour, Hon Iain Lees-Galloway, had approved caps of 14,400 and 16,000 for RSE recruitment in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively. The border closures linked with the COVID-19 pandemic meant that recruitment ceased on 19 March 2020 by which time 11,151 of the potential 14,400 RSE workers for the 2019/20 financial year had arrived. In the case of the 2020/21 approved allocation of 16,000, only 2,017 (12.6%, including the 6 Taiwanese listed in Table 1) actually arrived before 30 June 2021.

The 2,011 RSE workers from three Pacific source countries have been an incredibly important, but much reduced, component of the seasonal workforces of a small share of New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture businesses during 2021. By the beginning of September 2021, when this report was completed, nearly all of them will have completed the maximum seven months of employment allowed by the RSE special purpose visa for people from the three countries.

By early August 2021, only 10 of the BE 1 recruits had returned home – two Samoans and eight ni-Vanuatu. The great majority (over 99%) of these workers are still in New Zealand and most of them will be given extensions to their visas to allow them to work through into 2022. Visa extensions for these workers have been effectively guaranteed by the on-going challenges posed by COVID-19 that face RSEs wishing to recruit seasonal labour from the approved Pacific and Asian sources.

The arrangements for quarantine-free recruitment from selected Pacific sources (Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu), that were approved recently by the New Zealand Government, are on

hold at the time of writing this report.<sup>2</sup> The current outbreak of COVID-19 in the community in Auckland, and a small number of cases in Wellington, has meant that recruitment cannot commence until the country returns to alert level 1. Challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to cause major problems for seasonal labour supply in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries during the 2021/22 financial year.

Numbers recruited from RSE source countries will continue to be significantly below the usual intakes between September and April in a "normal" financial year. The Minister of Labour (Hon Kris Faafoi) has approved the 2019/20 cap of 14,400 for the 2021/22 financial year. This number will not be achieved given that workers from only three of the 15 Pacific and Asian source countries are currently approved for quarantine-free entry.

The total recruitment from these three countries in the last "normal" year for the RSE scheme (2018/19) was 8,453 – 2,409 from Samoa, 1,807 from Tonga and 4,237 from Vanuatu. It is highly unlikely these three countries will be able provide similar numbers for the 2021/22 year, especially given competition from Australia for recruits for their Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). When the total numbers of RSE arrivals between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 are tallied, we can expect the current financial year to be another "exceptional" one in the statistical record for the RSE scheme.

Richard Bedford  
Bedford Consulting

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300372310/covid19-travel-corridor-to-open-with-tonga-samoa-and-vanuatu--allowing-seasonal-workers-to-skip-miq>. See also C. Bedford (2021) 'New Zealand's RSE scheme struggling against COVID', DevPolicy Blog, 4 August (accessed at: <https://devpolicy.org/new-zealands-rse-scheme-struggling-against-covid-20210804/> Date downloaded: August 4, 2021)