



Timor-Leste's Progression in New Zealand's RSE Scheme: From Initiative to Implementation

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The integration of Timorese workers into New Zealand's horticulture sector follows multi-year diplomatic engagement and structured bilateral cooperation. As New Zealand marks the 20th anniversary of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, the Consulate presents an overview of the key milestones and ongoing developments surrounding Timor-Leste's participation.

Historical Timeline

- **2022:** Following a meeting with Hon. Phil Twyford, former Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control and Associate Minister of Immigration, former Timor-Leste Ambassador to NZ, Felicidade Guterres submitted an official letter manifesting Timor-Leste's formal interest in joining the RSE Scheme.
- **Early 2024:** Hon. Consul Dave Ananth, as President of the NZ Malaysia Business Association, assisted the Timor-Leste Embassy in advancing discussions with Hon.

Erica Stanford, Minister of Immigration, and Hon. Chris Penk, Associate Minister of Immigration. During these discussions, Minister Stanford acknowledged Timor-Leste's interest and referenced the commitment made by Prime Minister Luxon to Timorese Prime Minister Gusmão to accelerate consideration of extending the scheme. Following the conclusion of the 2023 RSE policy review, Minister Stanford noted that the Government was considering potential adjustments to the RSE framework, in line with manifesto and Coalition Agreement commitment, to ensure outcomes for New Zealand, employers, workers, and Pacific partners.

- **February 2026:** On 7 February 2026, the initial group of workers from Timor-Leste arrived in New Zealand and was received by their Ambassador, H.E Idelta Rodrigues, marking Timor-Leste's official inclusion under the RSE framework.

Current Developments and Outcomes

Following their arrival, Timorese workers have been deployed across orchards in New Zealand, contributing to the country's agricultural operations while gaining access to employment opportunities under the bilateral arrangement.

Recent media coverage outlines the progress of the program:

- **RNZ Country Life** detailed the deployment of Timorese personnel in regional orchards and their integration into local workplace operations.
- **The New Zealand Herald** examined the economic impact of the program, noting the household income generated for participants and their families in Timor-Leste.

The Consulate acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Government, Ministry officials, industry representatives, and community partners involved in the implementation of this agreement.

References and Media Coverage:

- **Immigration New Zealand Notice:** [First Arrival of Timor-Leste Workers under the RSE Scheme](#)
- **RNZ Country Life:** [Timorese Lend Hand in NZ Orchards](#)
- **NZ Herald:** [RSE Scheme at 20: Timor-Leste Workers Find Opportunities in New Zealand](#)