

## Spotlight on Katherine mango farms

18 November 2014

Fair Work Ombudsman inspectors will visit mango farms around Katherine, NT, this week to ensure seasonal workers are being paid correctly.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's Regional Services Team is making the site visits to up to 10 randomly-selected local properties as part of its three-year Harvest Trail project.

The national project is in response to persistent complaints and concerns about the horticulture sector's compliance with federal workplace laws.

Growers and labour-hire contractors will be asked to open their books, allowing inspectors to view records, with a particular emphasis on minimum pay rates, loadings and penalties.

Record keeping and pay slip obligations will also be monitored.

Earlier this month inspectors wrote to the employers to provide an education pack containing a copy of the Horticulture Award 2010, fact sheets and other resources to help them easily comply with workplace laws.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says it is important that mango growers and labour-hire contractors in Katherine understand their workplace obligations.

Ms James says many farms in the area rely heavily on labour from overseas workers, in particular working holiday makers, and employees from a non-English speaking background who may not be fully aware of their workplace rights.

"It is important that local employers understand and are complying with their workplace obligations," she said.

Checking that employers are complying with their obligation to have written agreements in place for workers paid piece rates is also a key focus of the Harvest Trail program.

"This is a really important issue. In the absence of a written piece rate agreement workers are required to be paid hourly pay rates," Ms James said.

Fair Work inspectors will also visit local backpacker hostels where pickers may be staying to speak directly to them and provide them with information about their workplace rights.

Employers and workers seeking assistance can consult the industry-specific information available at [www.fairwork.gov.au/harvesttrail](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/harvesttrail) (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/harvesttrail>), or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

Follow Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James on Twitter [@NatJamesFWO](https://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO) (<http://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO>), the Fair Work Ombudsman [@fairwork\\_gov\\_au](https://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) ([http://twitter.com/fairwork\\_gov\\_au](http://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au)) or find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au](http://www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au) (<http://www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au>).

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Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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