



UNITED STATES FARMWORKER FACTSHEET



I think that one day the labor of farmworkers will be valued.

—NC Farmworker

OVERVIEW OF FARM WORK

Agricultural labor includes planting, cultivating, harvesting, and preparing crops for market or storage.

Migrant farmworkers travel from place to place to work in agriculture and move into temporary housing while working; seasonal farmworkers work primarily in agriculture, but live in one community year-round.

The H-2A program in the United States allows foreign “guestworkers” to perform seasonal farm work under a temporary work visa tethered to a particular agricultural operation, association of agricultural operations, or crewleader.

Farmworkers are usually employed by growers and/or by crewleaders, who serve as intermediaries between growers and workers.

Immigration to the United States increased notably in the decade following the 1994 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Over two million Mexican farmers were driven out of business following this agreement.

“Something that I’d like to change... the pay, for sure. You’re like, this is hard and they pay you so little. I don’t know why farm work, which is harder, pays so much less.”

—NC Farmworker

DEMOGRAPHICS

- There are 2.5-3 million farmworkers in the United States.
- The states with the highest farm-worker population are California, Texas, Washington, Florida, Oregon and North Carolina.
- Nearly 72% of farmworkers identify as male and, on average, are 38 years old.
- 80% of all farmworkers are Hispanic or Latino. Over 90% of H-2A workers are from Mexico.
- 63% of farmworkers are married.
- 57% of workers have children.
- 39% are living apart from nuclear family members.
- 53% of farmworkers have work authorization such as U.S. citizenship, legal permanent residency or a visa.
- 84% of farmworkers are seasonal workers and 14% are migrant.
- 500,000 children work in agriculture.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

Farmworkers’ mean and median individual incomes from agricultural employment range from \$15,000–\$17,499. The mean and median total family incomes are \$20,000–\$24,999.

Where does your food dollar go?



15.8¢	84.2¢
Farm share	Marketing share

Farmworkers are often paid a piece rate for their work. A piece rate is a fixed rate of compensation based on a worker’s output such as an amount of compensation per box, bin, barn, bucket, truckload, field, or bucket of product cut, harvested, packed or prepared for sale. In some states, workers earn just 45 cents per bucket of harvested sweet potatoes.





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“AGRICULTURAL EXCEPTIONALISM”

Farmworkers were excluded from the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which protects workers acting collectively to form unions.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) originally excluded all farmworkers, and was amended in 1978 to mandate minimum wage for workers on large farms only. The FLSA has never been amended to provide overtime for farmworkers, and only a few states have passed laws requiring it.

The FLSA allows children as young as 10 to work in farm work under certain conditions and with their parents' consent. Children must be at least 14 to perform most other types of work, under both federal and state laws.

Although farm work is highly mechanized and is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the country, farmworkers are largely exempt from most federal workplace safety regulations. Farmworkers are typically less-protected or excluded from other employment-related protections at the state level including state minimum wage laws, unemployment benefits, and workers' compensation.



HEALTH AND SAFETY PROFILE

As one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S., farmworkers face health risks including:

- heat illness, musculoskeletal pain, and chronic disease
- pesticide exposure and toxic chemical injuries
- crowded and substandard housing
- barriers to health care including cost of health care, language barriers, and lack of transportation

45% of agricultural workers are uninsured.

Every day, about 167 agricultural workers suffer a lost-work-time injury.

In 2012, 374 farmers and farmworkers reportedly died from a work-related injury, resulting in a fatality rate of 20.2 deaths per 100,000 workers.

On average, 113 youth under the age of 20 die annually from farm-related injuries.

“Farmworkers feed the world. I think if everybody knows the importance of farmworkers, they will want to keep them healthy.”

—NC Health Outreach Coordinator



FARMWORKERS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

Across the country, farmworkers are organizing for justice and empowerment to improve their conditions.

To learn more and get involved, visit: saf-unite.org/content/campaigns

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Most data reported is from National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS). Survey was taken by agricultural workers during the fiscal years 2013-2014. Other resources referenced from:

1. Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2013 - 2014: A Demographic and Employment Profile of United States Farmworkers.
2. Farmworkers' Health Fact Sheet (Data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey)
3. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
4. US Sweet Potatoes Price Received: 20.70 USD/cwt for 2016
5. Sorry, Breitbart: Immigrant Farmworkers are Much Less Likely to Use SNAP, The New Food Economy.
6. Where Does Your Food Dollar Go?, Farm Credit Midatlantic
7. United States Department of Labor