

U.S. SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

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**AMERICA'S AGRICULTURAL CRISIS**

**AND**

**AGJOBS**

**THE AGRICULTURAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES,  
BENEFITS, AND SECURITY ACT**



AUGUST 2010

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ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

AUGUST 2010

## ALABAMA

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Gaines Farms is a family-owned farm located just north of the Alabama River near Autaugaville. The farm has been in business for more than 30 years and produces beef cattle, cotton, peanuts, hay, timber, and small grains.<sup>1</sup> Co-owner Harold Gaines traveled over 200 miles to attend a seminar on understanding the complicated requirements of the H-2A seasonal farm labor program. After attending the program, he explained the challenges he faces in finding workers to help him harvest the products on his farm. *“In agriculture, it's coming to this,”* states Mr. Gaines. *“On larger operations, especially labor-intensive operations like vegetables and produce, you can't hire good help. The ones you can hire are often not qualified, not motivated, or both.”*<sup>2</sup>

Shore Acres Plant Farm in Theodore, Alabama, is a family-owned plant nursery that sells a wide variety of foliage and flowering plants. Owner Oliver Washington IV explains how important guest workers are to the operation of his business. He states, *“We've had the same people for almost 10 years. They are a good group of guys from an agricultural area in Mexico. They grew up around plants, so they know what to do.”*<sup>3</sup>

Fresh, locally-grown produce is becoming more popular in Alabama, according to Don Wambles, a former administrator with the Alabama Farmers Market Authority. Local farmers, however, have had trouble keeping up with demand for traditional southern crops like peas, squash, and tomatoes, in part because of how labor intensive it is to harvest those crops. Harvesting traditional southern crops *“requires a lot of labor,”* says Mr. Wambles. *“All of these vegetables grown for retail are hand harvested. A farmer needs to be prepared to work in the afternoons and on the weekends.”*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “2005 Commercial Producer of the Year Nominees,” *Beef Improvement Federation*, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Helms, “Mobile Farmers Federation Sponsors H2A Seminar,” *Alfa Farmers News*, August 27, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Helms, “Demand For Farmers Markets on Rise In Alabama,” *Alfa Farmers News*, April 23, 2007.

## ALASKA

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Land estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show that 10,000 acres of Alaskan farmland have closed down since 2003.<sup>5</sup> The Alaska agriculture industry, which includes over 1,200 acres of labor-intensive crops such as potatoes, lettuce, and carrots, creates approximately 57 million dollars of economic activity for the state.<sup>6</sup>

## ARIZONA

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Paul Muthart is the general manager of the Pasquinelli Produce Company, a family farm that has been growing winter vegetables in the Yuma, Arizona, area for over 60 years. The farm cultivates approximately 8,500 acres of vegetables; this includes 4,900 acres of head lettuce and 2,200 acres of leaf lettuce.<sup>7</sup> Despite offering a salary above the minimum wage, health care benefits, paid vacations, and profit sharing, Pasquinelli Produce Company has not been able to find American workers to harvest their lettuce and watermelons.

Mr. Murthart believes *“it is appropriate to offer the jobs to American workers first.”* He goes on to explain the difficulty he has recruiting locally. He says, *“This is a very remote area, and how are you going to get 5,000 people to respond to a classified ad to work out here in the elements?”* Pasquinelli Produce Company remains short-handed, and when the crop needs to be picked within a short period of time, *“As much as a fifth of our produce is left to rot because we don’t have enough workers.”*<sup>8</sup>

Robbs Farms is a 200-acre family farm in Wilcox, Arizona. The farm has been in business for over 50 years and produces pistachios, pecans, onions, and pumpkins. Alan Robbs, second-generation owner, explains that labor shortages impact the farm’s crop harvests. Mr. Robbs says, *“We purposely cut back growing some of our vegetable crop because I didn't think we'd be able to get it harvested.”*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Farms, Land in Farms, and Livestock Operations 2008 Summary,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

<sup>6</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “2007 Census of Agriculture – State Data, Alaska,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, 2007

<sup>7</sup> Testimony of Paul Murthart, “Hearing on Proposed Promulgation of a National Marketing Agreement for Leafy Green Vegetables,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, Yuma, Arizona, October 14, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Gaynor, “Border farmers seek change on guest workers,” *Reuters*, June 24, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Kimble, “Immigration reform: When there's no one to harvest the crops,” *Tucson Citizen*, May 15, 2008.



*Field workers harvest lettuce by hand.*

Lettuce cultivation in Arizona is especially labor-intensive. The crop has only about a 5-day harvest window after reaching maturity, at which point each head of lettuce must be cut and packed into boxes by hand. *“You have to sort with the eye and the hand. No machine can find defects like the human eye,”* notes Brian Church, Director of Church Brothers, a major grower-shipper of fresh vegetables in Arizona. Tom Church, Brian’s brother and the President of Church Brothers, states that even though the work requires a large labor force, *“If we had to rely on American workers, it would never get done.”*<sup>10</sup>

An estimated 40 percent of Arizona’s lettuce harvesters are year-round migrant workers who live full-time in the United States. Lettuce farms in Yuma, Arizona, produce one-third of all leafy greens – lettuce, spinach, arugula, and radicchio – grown in the United States, especially during the winter months.<sup>11</sup> At the peak of the winter vegetable season, there are approximately 50,000 agricultural workers in Yuma, Arizona.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sarah Rubin, “Will Immigration Law Doom America’s Lettuce?” *The Atlantic*, May 11, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Joyce Lobeck, “In the fields: Skilled hands, trained eyes,” *Yuma Sun*, January 23, 2010.

Mark Ellsworth, President of the Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association, says, “*We as a vegetable industry cannot function without hand labor... We are constantly developing new technology, but the human eye cannot be replaced.*”<sup>13</sup>

Arizona and California farmers have moved at least 84,155 acres of production to Mexico. This has resulted in the transfer of 22,285 U.S. jobs to Mexico to cultivate crops ranging in diversity from avocado to green onions to watermelon.<sup>14</sup>

## ARKANSAS

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Craig Andersen, a horticulturalist with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, explains why access to a labor force is so critical to Arkansas farms. Mr. Anderson states, “*There are very few horticultural crops that are totally mechanized; somewhere in the process, you have to have labor. You can harvest sweet corn mechanically, but you still have to pack it. You can harvest green beans mechanically, but you still have to get them in boxes. Every step of the way, labor is an extremely valuable commodity.*”<sup>15</sup>

Rocky Friend operates a 150-acre orchard near Harrison in Boone County, Arkansas. The farm produces both peaches and apples for the wholesale market. Friend Orchards recently expanded its operations by building a packing house. The orchard relies on a year-round supply of immigrant laborers, who do all of the pruning, spraying and harvesting.<sup>16</sup>

The Caubble family has been harvesting apples on their small family apple orchard in Cross County, Arkansas, for over 50 years. The Caubbles do most of the work on their orchard themselves because of labor shortages in the area. According to Jack Caubble, “[I]t’s getting hard now to find the labor force.”<sup>17</sup>

The Friend and Caubble families are not the only Arkansans facing trouble on their farms. Land estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show that 600,000 acres of Arkansas farmland have closed down since 2003.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “U.S. Agricultural Activity in Mexico,” *Western Growers Association*, Spring 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Cole, “Hands ready as farm hits fruitful time,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Apr. 27, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Nancy Cole, “A onetime king’s humble return: Apple’s reign in Arkansas is history, but it has a future,” *Arkansas-Democrat-Gazette*, April 1, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Farms and Land in Farms Final Estimates 2003-2007” and “Farms, Land in Farms, and Livestock Operations 2008 Summary,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

## CALIFORNIA

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Steve Scaroni, of Scaroni Ranches, has been in the lettuce and broccoli industry for over three decades. He moved more than 2,000 acres and 500 jobs from his 50 million dollar operation in Heber, California, to Guadalajara, Mexico, as a result of the agricultural labor crisis. Mr. Scaroni explains, “*I have no choice but to offshore my operation.*” He exports to the United States about 2 million pounds of lettuce a week.<sup>19</sup>

Mel-Delin Dairy is a 250-acre farm with 900 cows in Turlock, California.<sup>20</sup> The family farm has been employing migrant labor for at least twenty years. Ray Souza, owner of Mel-Delin Dairy, states, “*I haven’t had a non-Hispanic want to do this work in 10 years... Once Americans get the job description they lose interest real quick.*” Phil Martin, an agricultural economist at the University of California, Davis, reiterates this point. He says, “*A whole lot of 18-year-olds prefer to work at McDonald’s for minimum wage than milk cows,*” despite the dairy industry’s average wage of \$11.38 an hour.<sup>21</sup>

California garlic and pepper farmer Tim Chiala says that the local labor supply has been tight in recent years, and the production of California peppers has largely transferred to Mexico. The Chialas are third-generation California farmers. Mr. Chiala says, “*Labor is always an issue. We might have all the people we need to harvest the crop one week and not the next. Unfortunately, even in tough economic times there are not a lot of people who want to do this work. It is hard work.*”<sup>22</sup>

The produce grown on Mr. Chiala’s family farm is distributed to companies nationally for use in salsas, soups, pasta sauces, and other consumer goods.<sup>23</sup> However, Mr. Chiala observes that the industry is changing due to the labor shortage: “*Smaller fruits and vegetables and anything labor intensive is going away and doesn’t get planted anymore.*”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Julia Preston, “Short on Labor, Farmers in U.S. Shift to Mexico,” *New York Times*, November 5, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Testimony of Ray Souza, “Hearing on Economic Conditions in the Dairy Industry,” *U.S. House Agriculture Committee*, July 14, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Miriam Jordan, “Got Workers? Dairy Farms Run Low on Labor,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Kate Campbell, “Portraits of a new generation of farmers,” *California Country*, September/October 2009.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Sheila Sanchez, “Area growers support new farmworker program,” *Morgan Hill Times*, March 31, 2008.

Asparagus plantings in California's Imperial Valley have also declined – from 786 acres in 2006 to 373 acres in 2008, a reduction of over 50 percent.<sup>25</sup> Ayrton Moiola, of the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association, predicted that California asparagus crops may disappear completely in the Imperial Valley if the demand for specialized asparagus planters and harvesters is not met.<sup>26</sup> According to Ms. Moiola, *“Asparagus in the Imperial Valley is an indicator as to what happens with crops that are labor intensive and what happens when labor becomes unfeasible economically and also just hard to find.”*<sup>27</sup>

U.S. Department of Agriculture data shows that over 9,000 acres of U.S. garlic crops have gone out of production in the last 11 years, and the supply of American-grown garlic has been reduced by 94 million pounds.<sup>28</sup> China has surpassed the United States as the lead supplier of garlic consumed by Americans.<sup>29</sup>



*Bell peppers are harvested in San Luis Obispo County, California.*

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<sup>25</sup> Lisa Rathke, “Farmers: Immigration reform needed for ag workers,” *Associated Press*, May 10, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Adler, “Growers face difficult planting choices,” *Ag Alert*, November 26, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Rathke, May 10, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Sophia Huang and Kuo Huang, “Increased U.S. Imports of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables,” *Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture*, September 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Weise, “China’s budding food industry faces scrutiny,” *USA Today*, May 22, 2007.

## COLORADO

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High Country Orchards is a 126-acre family owned and operated orchard, vineyard, and garden in Palisade, Colorado, specializing in peaches and grapes. High Country has not been able to retain local workers in labor-intensive agriculture jobs. Teresa High explains, “*Even now they still don’t want these jobs. Believe it or not, farming is much more skilled than people think... As much as I’d like these jobs to go to Americans, there aren’t a lot of Americans that want to do it.*”<sup>30</sup> This spring, High Country received 15 applications from local workers. Only nine showed up for work and after the first week, only five remained.<sup>31</sup>

Mark Harris of Grand Valley Farms observes, “*Most unemployed today are not able to jump at the opportunity to come out and do hard farm work... Many of them are unable to do these kinds of jobs.*”<sup>32</sup> The Harris family has been growing crops in the Grand Valley since 1958. Six years ago, Mr. Harris moved his seed production business outside of Colorado because he could not find enough workers. He observes that most Americans are not willing to do agricultural work, even in difficult economic times.<sup>33</sup>

Grant Family Farms, based in Wellington, Colorado, has been in business for 35 years and was the first farm in Colorado to be certified organic. Owner Andy Grant has been unable to recruit enough farm workers to harvest his organic vegetables, forcing him to cut back nearly half of his operation. Mr. Grant observes that other Colorado farmers have moved their farms abroad, where labor is abundant. Mr. Grant predicts, “*In another five, 10 years, the fruit and vegetable industry will be gone out of Colorado.*”<sup>34</sup>

Dewey Zabka, an onion and potato farmer in Northern Colorado, states, “*We do not have labor force locally that can take care of the vegetables and everything that has to happen during the season... We have a very major problem.*” Mr. Zabka owns Greeley’s Martin Produce and has been a farmer for over 50 years.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Amy Hamilton, “Demand High for Orchard Jobs,” *The Daily Sentinel*, March 6, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy Lofholm, “Colorado orchards tried to hire locally, but workers aren’t interested,” *Denver Post*, April 19, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Sharon Sullivan, “Leaders rally for immigration reform,” *Grand Junction Free Press*, February 12, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Chris Casey, “Labor shortage grows desperate for area farmers; Relief sought in state measure, but say U.S. reform needed,” *Greeley Tribune*, March 23, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

## CONNECTICUT

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The Lyman family has farmed in Connecticut since 1741. Lyman Orchards is now in its 265th year with John Lyman III, Executive Vice President, representing the eighth generation of his family to be directly involved in the business. Lyman Orchards has relied on seasonal migrant labor since the 1940s to harvest its apples. John Lyman explains the importance of seasonal H-2A workers to the family's business: "*We have used the H-2A program for decades in order to find workers for the jobs that we can't fill with U.S. workers... the foreign workers who harvest the fruit create other year round jobs on our farm for American workers.*"<sup>36</sup>

According to First Pioneer Farm Credit, "*Connecticut agriculture has come to rely on immigrant workers who present the necessary identity documents and are then employed on the same Federal and Connecticut terms as American workers... These hard-working individuals are filling jobs that Americans just do not want under any circumstances – whether their location is outside of major urban areas, working out of doors in variable weather conditions, and/or the substantial physical stamina required for them.*"<sup>37</sup>

165 Connecticut farms and 54,000 acres of farmland would be "highly vulnerable" to closing down or cutting back operations without immigrant labor. These farms support 261 million dollars in economic activity for Connecticut, 3,893 full-time farm jobs, and 6,741 jobs in agriculture-related businesses in Connecticut.<sup>38</sup>

## DELAWARE

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Allen Family Foods began as a small hatchery in Seaford, Delaware, in 1919. Now in its third generation, the company has grown to operate in three states and transport its products to customers throughout the world. Allen Farms' 3,000 employees produce over 500 million pounds of poultry products each year. The company underlines the importance of foreign labor, saying, "*If not for the foreign workers, agriculture and food processing industries ... could not operate.*"<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Telephone Interview with Barbara Leen, July 12, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Farm Labor and Immigration Reform: Economic Impact to Connecticut State Agriculture," *First Pioneer Farm Credit*, February 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Patricia V. Rivera, "Jobs are there for immigrant workers; Employers want ID, but no questions asked," *The News Journal*, May 8, 2006.

Luis Tlaseca, an administrator for the Farmworkers' Support Committee (CATA), acknowledges that immigrant labor is often irreplaceable on farms. He states, *"There's always work in the fields and in the mushroom houses. The landscaping companies, construction, restaurants, the chicken houses down in Delaware... But those who are American citizens won't go to work in a farm labor camp."*<sup>40</sup>

## FLORIDA

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Rick Roth grows vegetables, sugar cane, sod and trees on Roth Farms in Belle Glade, Florida. Mr. Roth has not been able to find American workers to harvest the crops on his farm. *"We have not had a native, local American worker harvesting our crops for the last 15 to 18 years,"* states Mr. Roth.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Stan Wood of Everglades Botanical Nursery in Davie, Florida, states that he has *"virtually never"* been able to hire American farm workers in his 44 years of business.<sup>42</sup>

Mr. Roth believes that Congress must change the complicated H-2A system to bring some predictability to the labor market. *"Congress has to find the intestinal fortitude to do this. We're businessmen and we need to know we'll have a labor force three, four, five years down the road."*<sup>43</sup>

Florida's sizable dairy industry is also highly dependent upon migrant labor. Ray Hodge of Southeast Milk, Inc., a dairy cooperative that includes over one hundred Florida milk producers, explains, *"If all those [immigrant] workers were kicked out, in about a week there would be a crisis. Foreign-born workers are the agricultural workforce in this country. Nobody else wants to do it."*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph N. DiStefano, "Immigration reform would ease U.S. hypocrisy," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 4, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Luis F. Perez, "Guest Worker Program for Agriculture Sought," *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, April 6, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> John Lantigua, "Florida growers warn of danger to food supply," *Palm Beach Post*, May 24, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## GEORGIA

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Bill Brim is the co-owner of Lewis Taylor Farms in Tifton, Georgia. The 4,000-acre vegetable farm has hired workers through the H-2A program since 1998. Mr. Brim states that he needs to hire through the H-2A program because *“most U.S. workers want jobs that are not as physically demanding as field production. If high wages were what attracted US workers, we would have plenty working on our farm right now. Here in [Georgia], we were offering more than \$8.50/hour when... minimum wages went to \$7.25/hour. In addition we offered free housing and we didn't have many takers. So, without a guest worker program that I can afford and use, there's no way to get my produce in or out of the ground.”*<sup>45</sup>

*“I would love to employ US workers instead of using the H-2A program but that is not reality,”* says L.G. “Bo” Herndon.<sup>46</sup> L.G. Herndon Jr. Farms, Inc. is a family owned and operated business in Lyons, Georgia. The farm has 500 acres of Vidalia Sweet Onions, 550 acres of sweet corn, 520 acres of leafy green vegetables (collards, mustard, turnips and kale), hogs, and cows. Herndon has been in business for more than 20 years.<sup>47</sup>

During the 2006 harvest, Randy Scarbor of Omega, Georgia, was not able to hire the migrant workers he hired during past harvests to work on his 305-acre sweet potato and cantaloupe farm. He explains, *“I wound up hiring some locals that weren't worth hauling to the field. It was the worst harvest labor in my life and I've been in the farming business 35 years.”*<sup>48</sup>

Georgia's vegetable industry creates 2.1 billion dollars in economic activity and supports 18,000 jobs, according to a 2008 study by the University of Georgia. The fruit and nut industry in Georgia, including the state's well-known pecans, generates another 754 million dollars and supports 7,000 jobs in Georgia.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Dan Bremer, Bill Brim, Frank Gasperini, Charles Hall, L.G. Herndon, Jr., Bob Redding, Sherry Sparks “Rule Places Heavy Burden on Georgia Growers,” *Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association*, February 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *L.G. Herndon Jr. Farms, Inc.* <http://www.vidaliasfinest.com/>.

<sup>48</sup> “Farmers fear tighter supply of immigrant workers this year,” *Associated Press*, March 15, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> “A Brief Focus of Georgia Agriculture,” *University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development*, 2009.

## HAWAII

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Paradise Flower Farms ships Hawaiian flowers to locations throughout the United States. The company grows all of their flowers on a 51-acre farm on the slopes of Mt. Haleakala on Maui, Hawaii. Teena Rasmussen, owner of the flower farm, states, “*We’ve got to harvest no matter what... [Migrant workers are] great, wonderful guys. They want to work. They want to work hard... The work we do is outside and it’s hot. We’re going to have to scramble to do what we can short-term... But long-term we’re going to have to find a source for labor. If not, there’s going to be some serious consequences to our farms.*”<sup>50</sup>

Located in Kula, Maui, Howard’s Nurseries hosts a variety of blooming bulb plants and trees. The nursery, owned by Howard and Sandy Takishita, is a local producer of fresh flowers to Whole Foods Market. The nursery hires seasonal migrant workers to help harvest the plants. Sandy Takishita states, “*We’ve had a difficult time filling our labor needs... [H-2A workers] fulfill positions I cannot fill locally.*”<sup>51</sup>

Kauai Coffee Company began in the early 1800s as McBryde Sugar Company, one of the first sugar growers in Hawaii. Kauai Coffee Company and its parent company, Alexander and Baldwin, today own 22,000 acres of land on the island of Kauai. The company now produces over half of the coffee grown in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Donn Soares, Kauai Coffee’s general manager, states, “*Seasonal workers are, in fact, an important part of our agricultural staffing needs in order to have an optimum harvest/production.*”<sup>53</sup>

## IDAHO

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Idaho farmers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars as a result of labor shortages during the fall 2006 harvest. Apple farmer John Williamson lost about 30 percent of the apple crop on his 700 acres of orchards when the fruit began splitting open while still on the trees. “*We figure we lost about 3,000 boxes of apples,*” he says.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Dan Naksao, “Island farms lose workers,” *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, June 28, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Nakaso, “Farmers fear loss of migrant workers,” *Honolulu Star Adviser*, June 7, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> “About Us,” Kauai Coffee Company, <http://www.kauaicoffee.com/>, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Nakaso, June 7, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Joe Estrella, “Labor Shortage Costs Valley Fruit Growers Thousands of Dollars,” *The Idaho Statesman*, Nov. 6, 2006.

Kelly Henggeler is a third-generation fruit grower from Fruitland, Idaho. Her family business, Henggeler Fruit Packing Company, grows, packs, and ships apples, plums, and peaches and has been in business since 1943. Ms. Henggeler says that, even in difficult economic times, American workers will not take seasonal apple-picking jobs. *“Despite our best recruitment efforts, it is difficult (if not impossible) to find local workers,”* she reports. Ms. Henggeler worries about the consequences: *“The 2010 apple harvest is quickly approaching and though the crop appears outstanding in many areas of the country, most growers are uncertain if they will have enough workers to pick it... We lack sufficient legal labor to prune, pick, pack and process our crop. Without it, we could see the decline and outsourcing of the domestic apple industry.”*<sup>55</sup>



*Apples are hand-picked into heavy bags.*

Snake River Fruit Growers grades, packages, and markets fruit produced at farms in the Sunny Slope region of Canyon County, Idaho. In 2006, Bob Gonzales, a sales agent for Snake River Fruit Growers, observed, *“[The harvest] was horrible. We were either going out daily trying to find people, or we were begging Job Service to send people out here... We lost 15,000 packages of apricots.”*<sup>56</sup>

*“Migrant labor is a huge part of our labor industry here,”* says Beverley Williamson of Williamson Orchards & Vineyards. Williamson Orchards and Vineyards is a family owned and operated business located in Caldwell, Idaho. Ms. Williamson says, *“[Reforming the H-2A program would] keep them in business [and would be] a huge help for the local area.”*<sup>57</sup> The Williamson family planted their first trees in the early 1900s, and since that time four generations of Williamsons have worked on the farm. The original homestead of 80 acres has grown to over 700 acres of fruit and row crop. The farm now produces a wide variety of soft fruits and apples.

<sup>55</sup> Testimony of Kelly Henggeler, *House Committee on Agriculture*, May 1, 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Joe Estrella, “Labor Shortage Costs Valley Fruit Growers Thousands of Dollars,” *The Idaho Statesman*, November 6, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> “More Workers Needed for Idaho Ag Industry,” *Fox 12 Idaho*, 2010.

A 2009 report published by researchers at the University of Idaho indicates that Americans are not taking jobs milking cows, despite the industry's average wage of \$12 to \$13 per hour. One Idaho dairy farmer surveyed said, "*The whole reason dairy jobs are held by immigrants is because [local] people won't take these jobs.*"<sup>58</sup> Brent Olmstead of Milk Producers of Idaho observes, "*The domestic workforce no longer wants to do a lot of these jobs, even with a 10 percent unemployment rate... It is our experience in Idaho that the domestic labor force in Idaho is not applying for manual labor positions.*"<sup>59</sup>

Dairy is the top agricultural product in Idaho, creating over 1.84 billion dollars in revenue for the Idaho economy every year.<sup>60</sup> Idaho dairy farms and manufacturers generate more than 26 million dollars in tax revenues annually. In southern Idaho, it is measured that the dairy industry sustains 9,260 on-site jobs and 22,730 off-farm jobs in sectors like trucking, packing, manufacturing, and insurance.<sup>61</sup>

## ILLINOIS

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Rendleman Orchards is an 800-acre family farm in Alto Pass, Illinois, that has been in operation since 1873. The farm is now in its sixth generation of family farming and grows peaches, nectarines, apples, and early vegetable crops. Rendleman Orchards hires approximately two dozen migrant workers to provide seasonal labor for the harvest. Betty Sirles, an owner of the orchard, talks about the workers on the farm: "*These are very hard-working people... I just don't see [local] people who want to do the work they do... There are no applicants for those jobs.*"<sup>62</sup>

Kankakee Nursery Company in Kankakee, Illinois, grows shade and ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, perennials, and landscape evergreens and employs about 200 workers. Dick Worth, the nursery's vice president states, "*It's hard to find labor to do the kind of work that we do here.*"<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Priscilla Salant, J.D. Wulforst, and Stephanie Kane, with Christine Dearien, "Community Level Impacts of Idaho's Changing Dairy Industry," *University of Idaho*, October 26, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Betsy Z. Russell, "Idaho committee kills immigration bill," *The Spokesman-Review*, March 8, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Idaho 2009 State Agriculture Overview" *U.S. Department of Agriculture*.

<sup>61</sup> "Idaho's Dairy Farm Families Bring A Lot to the Table," *Ag Weekly*, June 9, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Ray Quintanilla, "Migrants' dry season; Crops falter as gas, immigration woes shrink workforce," *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Katherine Glover, "Immigration bill has easier terms for farm workers," *Medill Reports* (Northwestern University), May 24, 2007.

Kankakee Nursery is an 80-year-old business that grew from 20 acres to the over 3,000 acres it has today. The nursery has over 500 varieties of plants, with millions of plants in production.

## INDIANA

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Fair Oaks Farms is a family-owned farm located in Fair Oaks. The farm has 30,000 dairy cows on 10 separate dairy sites in Indiana. The farm hires workers from Latin America to assist with production. Mike McCloskey, a co-owner of Fair Oaks Farms, explains, “[*Immigrant workers are in the barns*] when it’s minus 10 degrees and when it’s 95 degrees and 95 percent humidity.”<sup>64</sup>

Bob Benson is a Noblesville, Indiana, sheep producer who hires migrant labor to help with his herd. He says that “*retention of this key labor source [is] extremely difficult... Once you get a sheep herder trained, you don’t want to do it all over again.*”<sup>65</sup>

Fred Gutwein & Sons hires between 600 and 700 migrant or seasonal workers to detassel corn each year. Mr. Gutwein explains that corn must be detassled at a specific time, and hiring a workforce that can detassel the company’s 12,000 acres of corn across northwest Indiana is critically important. If the corn is not detassled at the right time, the crop is lost. Mr. Gutwein states, “*It used to be we could get all of the youngsters we wanted... I don’t know what we’d do if we didn’t have migrant and seasonal workers... We just need lots of them, and we need to get our jobs done in a timely manner.*”<sup>66</sup>

Frey Farms Produce is located in rural Wayne County, Indiana, and specializes in producing watermelons, cantaloupes, pumpkins, and fall ornamentals. Leonard Frey oversees the 1,000 acres of the Frey Farm Produce operation in Gibson and Posey counties. The company hires about 100 migrant workers to harvest cantaloupes and watermelons during the summer. Mr. Frey comments, “*We don’t turn away locals who want to work in the fields... but the truth of the matter is that it’s hot, hard work for as many as 12 hours a day.*”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> M. Jordan, July 30, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Dick Hagen, “Immigration, imports important issues to lamb producers,” *The Land Online*, December 25, 2009,

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Dits, “Hungry for work; Illegal migrants crucial for crop labor, some farmers say.” *South Bend Tribune*, July 22, 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Garret Mathews, “Harvest is hard work, but reward is sweet for workers, consumers,” *Evansville Courier & Press*, August 14, 2009.

The Red Gold Company is a family owned producer of tomato products in operation in 1942. Each year, the company hires migrant workers to sort tomatoes. Steve Austin of Red Gold states, *“There is a labor shortage in Indiana. We were supporting an exemption for seasonal migrant workers who’ve been coming to Indiana for decades to support agriculture. There’s probably 15,000 migrants come to help get the crops planted and harvested.... [Americans] won’t take them... Few people will leave a job to come and work for two months.”*<sup>68</sup>

## IOWA

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Iowa farmer Tom Bell of Conesville depends on seasonal H-2A workers to pick melons and detassel corn – jobs which Americans do not want to do for long hours every day. Mr. Bell says, *“They are hard workers and this is a miserable job.”*<sup>69</sup> He further states, *“I just hope [the Congress will] pass something so that when these workers come up here, they can go to work and then go home... They’re excellent workers. We need them here in Iowa.”*<sup>70</sup>

Green Meadows Dairy is a family dairy farm owned and operated by Shep and Natalie Ysselstein in northern Iowa. Workers on Green Meadows receive an annual salary of \$38,000; they often put in 11 hour days, time on the weekends, and are exposed to difficult conditions. Prior to working with immigrant dairy workers, Shep Ysselstein says that the workers he hired were unreliable and barely lasted three months. Mr. Ysselstein says that his immigrant workers *“are people that are ambitious enough to want to move to another country and apply themselves.”* For Mr. Ysselstein, the H-2A program, though costly, is worth using. *“Reliability is everything,”* he says.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Brandi Watters, “Red Gold Hires Migrants, Not Immigrants,” *The Herald Bulletin*, April 22, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Melissa Regennitter, “Migrant workers in Conesville say they’ve been left stranded,” *Muscatine Journal*, August 1, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Jerry Perkins, “Agriculture firms study immigration proposal,” *Des Moines Register*, May 19, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Colleen Krantz, “Iowa farmers hiring foreign workers,” *Des Moines Register*, April 15, 2006.

## KANSAS

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Clayton Befort, a custom wheat cutter in Hays, Kansas, worries about changes in the H-2A program. His farm, Befort Harvesting, cuts about 100,000 acres each season and hires about 25 workers through the H-2A program. According to Mr. Befort, *“We’re all concerned. If they make it harder [to use H-2A], it will be tough to get enough help.”* Mr. Befort typically relies on the H-2A labor program to fill about half of his 50-person workforce to cut grain in hot Kansas wheat fields.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Lance Frederick with Frederick Harvesting, states, *“Farmers could get more wheat cut if we had more labor... You worry right up until harvest whether you’ll have enough.”*<sup>73</sup>

Kansas dairy farmers are also struggling with labor shortages. A western Kansas dairy farmer states, *“The shortage of agricultural labor in Kansas has created significant challenges in filling existing positions on my dairy and has limited my ability to expand our operations in the state. Jobs on my farm include a starting annual salary of \$30,000, two weeks of paid vacation, plus health care after the first 90 days.”*<sup>74</sup>

## KENTUCKY

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Langley Farm in Shelbyville, Kentucky, produces burley tobacco, corn, and soybeans on more than 5,000 acres of land. The farm requires 12 workers for planting in the spring and 30 laborers for the harvests in August. Owner Doug Langley says that he depends on H-2A seasonal guest workers, even though using the H-2A program is cumbersome. *“This is not a one-person farm,”* he says. *“I have many talented people I rely on to make this place work. I’m no good without the people who help me.”*<sup>75</sup>

Kentucky farmers grew 73,000 acres of burley tobacco in 2006, but a labor shortage decreased profit on farms, as farmers struggled to find workers to harvest the large crop. Will Snell, a tobacco economist at the University of Kentucky, says, *“Family and local labor for large producers is not available.”*<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Amy Bickel, “Visa restrictions to reduce harvest hires,” *Hutchinson News*, March 1, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Alan Bjerga, “U.S. Wheat Farmers Face Grim Harvests as Immigration Bill Dies,” *Bloomberg News*, July 3, 2007.

<sup>74</sup> Obtained by Charlie Garrison, National Milk Producers Federation, December 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Janie Batson, “Kentucky Farmer of the Year: Doug Langley,” *The Moultrie Observer* September 23, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Wayne Harr, “Labor shortage plagues harvest of burley acres,” *Southern Farmer*, March 2007.

Mr. Snell knows of farmers who, after the 2006 labor shortages, delayed their plantings the following year due to labor anxieties. He states: “*Growers who plan on being in tobacco for the long term and getting larger are going to have to depend upon a readily available, dependable source of labor such as the H-2A worker program.*”<sup>77</sup>

## LOUISIANA

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“*We would love to have local people come pick our strawberries. But if we don’t hire workers from Mexico, our strawberries would just rot in the field,*” says Rhonda Poche of Landry-Poche Strawberry Farm. The Holden, Louisiana, farm has been family owned and operated since 1926.<sup>78</sup>

“*In the wake of [Hurricane] Katrina, I was having such difficulty hiring help, I called my friends in North Carolina and asked if they could find me any workers,*” says Christmas tree farmer Clarke Gernon. Mr. Gernon was so desperate following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that he reached out to Christmas tree farmers in North Carolina for help. In mid-October, he received a call from two North Carolina growers who put together a crew of eight migrant workers to help tend to Christmas trees damaged by the storm. Mr. Gernon said, “*Those guys worked a lot faster than I could have imagined. I would never have gotten it done working alone.*”<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Gernon’s 45-acre Shady Pond Tree Farm is located near the Town of Pearl River in St. Tammany Parish, the Pine Belt of southeast Louisiana. The farm was founded in the late 1800s and is home to 16,000 trees of a dozen different varieties including many exotics.<sup>80</sup>

Dr. William F. Manger of Northwestern State University in Louisiana observes: “*Agriculture is the largest source of employment for Hispanic workers in Central Louisiana... Because of the labor-intensive nature of sweet potato farming and the difficulty of obtaining reliable seasonal sources of labor, sweet potato farmers have come to rely on Hispanic workers to plant and harvest their crops.*”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “New Arrivals: Immigration and the Bayou State,” *Louisiana Public Square*, June 21, 2006.

<sup>79</sup> “South Louisiana Christmas Tree Farmer Gets Help From Out-of-state Friends,” *Louisiana State University*, October 21, 2005.

<sup>80</sup> “Shady Pond Tree Farm,” <http://www.cgernon.com/sptf/>, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Dr. William F. Manger, “The Hispanic Population of Rural Central Louisiana and Their Traditions,” *Louisiana Division of the Arts*, 1999-2003.

## MAINE

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*Seasonal workers harvest blueberries on fields owned by Wyman's of Maine.*

Wyman's of Maine is a family owned business in operation since 1874 and has grown to be the largest U.S. supplier of premium wild blueberry products. Wyman's harvests wild blueberries that grow naturally on over 7,000 acres of land. During the summer harvest season, which runs from July to early September, Wyman's of Maine employs over 500 seasonal workers, including many H-2A workers, as rakers, machine harvester operators, and factory workers.

Edward Flanagan, President and Chief Operating Officer of Wyman's, explains the importance of a steady and reliable workforce to American agriculture: *"The idea that if business paid more Americans would take the work is not true in agriculture. If labor can't get to the crops, the crops will get to the labor. We don't make our computers, autos or clothes in the U.S. anymore. We can hardly afford to send our food supply offshore."*<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ed Flannigan, *Wyman's of Maine*, E-mail to Barbara Leen, July 15, 2010.

Wyman's has helped to make Maine the largest producer of wild blueberries in the United States. The fields of wild blueberries in Maine are located in Washington, Hancock, and Waldo Counties, and the harvest involves an estimated 10,000 workers. David Yarborough, an economist with the University of Maine, warns that the sustainability of Maine's famous blueberries depends on the ability of farmers to hire all the harvesters needed to pick the crop: "*Concerns for the future health of the wild blueberry business in Maine include regulations required to hire a suitable labor force to harvest and process the crop.*"<sup>83</sup>

## MARYLAND

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Angelica Nurseries has been in business for three generations since 1965 on the Eastern Shore in Maryland. Owner Bernie Kohl Jr. first started working on the nursery with his two brothers and their father, Thomas Kohl. The family farm began on 300 acres and has since grown to be the largest nursery in Maryland with 2,100 acres.<sup>84</sup>

Angelica grows woody ornamentals, evergreens, and deciduous shrubs on the farm; the work requires lengthy outdoor manual labor that few locals are willing to take on. "*The recession has done virtually nothing to change the reality: While we have seen a small uptick in Americans applying for farm jobs, few actually report to work, and many fewer stay,*" explains Mr. Kohl.<sup>85</sup>

Mr. Kohl has used the H-2A agricultural worker program for 10 years to try to fill jobs untaken by local workers, but he says the program is "difficult and unattractive." He points out that the federal government has issued new rules for using the H-2A program three times in just the past three years.

Mr. Kohl believes that, without reforms, America's specialty crop and livestock industries will relocate to other countries, meaning that the jobs and economic output supported by these American growers will also move abroad.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Blanca Santiago, Diane Belanger, Nicole Witherbee, Carol Hughes-Hallett, Maeve Kieffer, and Matt Crommett, "The Growing Latin American Influence," *Maine Center for Economic Policy*, 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Debra Siedt, "Farmers in need of help hope federal agriculture immigrant worker," *The Daily Record*, June 4, 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Testimony of Bernie Kohl, Jr., *House Agriculture Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture*, July 20, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Lack of timely and thoughtful resolution of the farm labor crisis will hasten the offshoring of our specialty crop and livestock agriculture,” he predicts. “As production shifts to Canada or Mexico or Chile or China, America will lose thousands upon thousands of U.S. jobs upstream and downstream of the farmer that exist here now because we are producing here.”*<sup>87</sup>

## MASSACHUSETTS

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Patterson Farm has been farming the rich Connecticut River valley soil in Sunderland, Massachusetts, since 1983. Patterson Farm is one of the largest sources for wholesale pumpkins, Indian corn, and peppers in New England. The farm provides pumpkins in wholesale lots to farm stands, specialty grocery stores, and agro tourism destinations throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island, New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont. During its 27-year history, Patterson Farms has relied on workers from Jamaica hired through the H-2A program to harvest its crops.<sup>88</sup>

Cynthia Roberts, the farm’s manager, relies on the same workers each year: *“These guys are conscientious, hard workers who know just about everything there is to know about choosing ripe pumpkins, sizing, proper handling, quality... They’ve worked here long enough as a team that the operation runs smoothly and efficiently... Take away a dependable work force from any business and what do you have?”*<sup>89</sup>

This year, Patterson Farm was unable to secure workers through the H-2A program. The farm has also been unable to find American workers to harvest crops. Patterson Farm managers are unsure if they will be able to harvest their crops this year, threatening the farm’s survival.

Ms. Roberts states that because the farm could not secure workers through the H-2A program, *“We’re behind on our harvest which means our product is over ripening on the stalk. When it becomes too overripe, it’s no good - can’t sell it.”*<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Cynthia Roberts, Patterson Farm, E-mail to Barbara Leen, July 28, 2010

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



*Pumpkins are lined up from the harvest on Patterson Farm.*

In Lancaster, Massachusetts, Cindy McLaughlin helps oversee the farming on Deershorn Farm, which was founded in 1904 as a dairy farm and eventually grew to include orchards, greenhouses, and vegetable fields. Farming is not your everyday 9-to-5 work, explains Ms. McLaughlin; the work depends on the season and the needs of her crops. *“You’re out there in the sun, the rain, the heat, the snow, the cold,”* she says. *“When a crop needs to be picked, it needs to be picked. When plants need to be watered, they need to be watered, or they die.”*<sup>91</sup>

According to First Pioneer Farm Credit, *“Without immigrant labor, many farm businesses in Massachusetts and nationwide will face critical labor shortages.... With the increasing consumer demand for quality products, a delay in harvest caused by a labor shortage can have a dramatic negative impact.”*<sup>92</sup>

An estimated 120 Massachusetts farms and 38,800 acres of cropland would be at risk of closing down without immigrant labor. If these farms shut down, 1,593 on-farm Massachusetts jobs and over 9,000 off-farm Massachusetts jobs in agricultural services, input, processing, and marketing would be at risk.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Donna Boynton, “Annual transplants; Seasonal guest workers from Jamaica till New England soil.” *Worcester Gazette and Telegram*, May 4, 2007.

<sup>92</sup> “Farm Labor and Immigration Reform: Economic Impact to Massachusetts State Agriculture,” *First Pioneer Farm Credit*, February 2008.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

## MICHIGAN

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Russ Costanza grows squash, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggplants on 500 acres in Michigan. In the 1960s, when his father was running the Costanza family farm, 100 percent of the farm workers came from the local town, Benton Harbor. Today, not one of his workers comes from Benton Harbor – despite the fact that the town has had a 40 percent unemployment rate.

*“There are a lot of people without jobs,”* says Mr. Costanza. *“But... they won’t take these jobs... finding people to work today is getting tough.”*<sup>94</sup> The Costanza farm has an estimated 4 million dollar impact on the local economy, through purchases of fertilizer, box and package supplies, and the payroll. The farm pays \$600,000 in local, state, and federal taxes annually.

Randy Bjorge grows apples, peaches, apricots, cherries, and apples on orchards in Coloma, Michigan. He is worried about having a sufficient workforce to help out on his 230-acre farm, Fruit Acres Farms. Mr. Bjorge employs migrant workers because local help is difficult to find. He says, *“We just don’t have the local people coming in anymore... We used to have southern help back in the 80s. They just don’t come up anymore.”*<sup>95</sup>

Mike Hildebrand of Berrien Springs, Michigan, explains: *“Because the work is hard and people will stand outside in the 90-degree heat, finding qualified workers who want to do the work isn’t easy.”*<sup>96</sup> Mr. Hildebrand cultivates 225 acres of cherries, peaches, nectarines, apples, and grapes on Hildebrand Fruit Farms, which has been family owned and operated since 1927.<sup>97</sup>

Fred Leitz used to be able to recruit U.S. workers onto his family’s apple farm near Benton Harbor, Michigan. He says that Americans today only want to drive tractors; they do not want to work in the fields. Migrant workers now account for 200 of the 225 positions on Mr. Leitz’s staff, and he admits that he would not be in business without their help.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ashley Bentley, “Labor a growing problem in Michigan,” *The Packer*, June 28, 2010.

<sup>95</sup> John Paul, “Farmers question effect immigration reform could have on workforce,” *WSBT Michigan*, May 25, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> “Profile of Mike Hildebrand,” *LinkedIn*, 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Jennifer Youssef, “Farmers, workers divided over proposed migrant workers bill,” *The Detroit News*, October 19, 2009.



*Apples are harvested into packing lines and crates.*

*“There are no replacements,” says Mr. Leitz. “I have no domestic workers willing to come in and pick this stuff. I would be bankrupt.”<sup>99</sup>*

Michigan is home to more than 900 apple growers, and an estimated 90 percent rely on migrant laborers to harvest their apples every fall.<sup>100</sup> Michigan farm workers hand-pick 26 million bushels, or 1.1 billion pounds, of apples every year, making Michigan the third largest apple supplier in the United States, behind Washington State and New York.<sup>101</sup>

Agricultural researchers at Michigan State University estimate that 10 to 20 percent of the fresh produce harvested in the United States will transfer abroad without migrant workers.<sup>102</sup> Several years ago, 20 percent of Michigan’s apples went unharvested due to the shortage of pickers.<sup>103</sup> Two years ago, Michigan asparagus growers lost 15 percent of their crops – valued at \$2 million – as a result of labor shortages.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Jodee Taylor, “Apples: Eat 'em fresh, eat 'em now,” *The Record-Eagle*, October 19, 2009.

<sup>102</sup> Tim Alberta, “Growers worry about shrinking migrant worker pool,” *Capital News Service*, November 9, 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Denise Yockey, John Bakker, “Family Farms Feed Michigan’s Future Coalition Announced,” Michigan Apple Committee, May 17, 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Youssef, October 19, 2009.

John Bakker of the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board says that migrant labor is “absolutely key” to asparagus growers in Mason, Oceana, Van Buren, Manistee, and Berrien counties in Michigan. He warns, “*Unless Americans want their fresh fruits and vegetables to come from other countries, we're going to have to figure out a way to get people in here to harvest our crops.*”<sup>105</sup>

Mr. Bakker has seen firsthand that local workers will not take jobs harvesting asparagus. “*I've personally tried to find and hire local people to do the job, and despite high unemployment, we've had very little success,*” he reports. “*We estimate about 5 to 8 percent of our asparagus crop this past spring was destroyed due to lack of labor.*”<sup>106</sup>

One asparagus farmer from Montague, Michigan, expressed his frustration in the summer of 2008, when the shortage of harvesters forced him to let one-third of his asparagus crops lie fallow. The farmer tried to hire local high school students and recruit unemployed adult workers, but none of them lasted. “*They never made it through lunch,*” he explains. “*Too hard, too dirty, too little pay. They never even returned after lunch for their pay.*”<sup>107</sup>

## MINNESOTA

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Pepin Heights Orchards, founded in 1949, is a 300-acre apple farm in Lake City, Minnesota. Owner Dennis Courtier says the farm needs seasonal harvesters who are trained to pick the fruit with the right technique. “*A bad crew can destroy a crop,*” he says. Jose Garcia, a labor manager on Pepin Heights Orchards, acknowledges that the work is not easy. An experienced harvester can pick every apple on about 15 trees in one hour. Crews use two- and three-legged ladders for fruit on higher branches. Each apple is examined for bruises and picked with the stem intact. “*It's a hard job to do,*” says Mr. Garcia.<sup>108</sup>

Joe Bailey runs a family-owned nursery in Newport, Minnesota, where they grow ornamental plants, trees, and fruit. “*If we relied only on our local work force we'd be short-staffed by 75 percent,*” he says. He spent many resources recruiting local workers to fill the 300 to 350 seasonal positions on his farm in the spring of 2009.

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<sup>105</sup> Tim Alberta, “Growers worry about shrinking migrant labor pool,” *Capital News Service*, November 9, 2007.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Tom Grein, “Different Crops, Similar U.S. Labor Problem,” *The Hendon Observer*, June 5, 2009.

<sup>108</sup> John Weiss, “Apple picking involves patience, deft technique,” *Post-Bulletin of Rochester*, October 7, 2001.

Mr. Bailey explains, “*We worked with the local job service and unemployment office and we actively advertised and recruited in the area... The jobs were advertised as paying between \$8.25 and \$10.25 per hour for three to eight months of work. [But] we only got one-fourth of the workers we needed from the [local] recruitment process.*”<sup>109</sup>

Mr. Bailey estimates that about 85 percent of the seasonal jobs on his nursery are filled by immigrants. Importantly, these seasonal workers support the 600 full-time workers on his nursery who live in the local community. “*If we didn’t have those immigrant workers, we’d be out of business,*” he emphasizes. “*In our experience, immigrant workers aren’t taking jobs away from American workers instead they are supporting the year-round work of several hundred U.S. citizens in our company.*”<sup>110</sup>

Family farmers George and Charlene Duban of Lonsdale, Minnesota, explain that immigrant farm workers support Minnesota’s year-round industries, like dairy: “*We operate a 400 cow dairy and a crop farm in MN. On our dairy, we milk three times a day. We have a Spanish [speaking] labor force. If we did not have them, there would be no dairy. Our [immigrant] laborers are dedicated, hard-working people. They will work 7 days a week when needed. They do their job well and are on time.*”<sup>111</sup>

## MISSISSIPPI

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Eddie Courtney owns Courtney Farms on 650 acres of land in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. His family has been farming for more than 20 years, and they grow watermelons, strawberries, squash, cucumbers, bell peppers, tomatoes, peas, butter beans, and okra. Mr. Courtney indicates he has trouble finding a local workforce. “*We use as much domestic labor as we can, but that is hard to find,*” he says. “*We did that for six or seven years, and it just got worse every year. Nobody who lives around here wants to pick vegetables, so we have to use migrant labor.*”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Joan Olson, “Immigration reform vital to food and agriculture,” *Joan Olson Public Relations*, July 9, 2009.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *U.S. House Committee on Agriculture*, “Labor Needs of American Agriculture: Prepared statement of Amber S. Brady, General Counsel/Director of Agricultural Policy, South Dakota Department of Agriculture (Attached Letters),” October 4, 2007.

<sup>112</sup> Becky Gillette, “Courtney Farms cuts out the middleman for farmers,” *The Mississippi Business Journal*, Vol. 23, Oct. 2001.

The produce grown on Courtney Farms is sold locally and distributed to retail outlets on the Mississippi Coast and in Birmingham, New Orleans, and Pensacola. While members of the immediate family work on the farm and at their retail store to sell fresh produce locally, they rely on seasonal, migrant workers to keep Courtney Farms in operation. *“Our labor comes in March, is here for nine months, and in December they have to go back home and get their papers renewed,”* explains Mr. Courtney. *“If it weren’t for the migrant labor, we would probably be out of business. It would be a lot easier if you could use domestic help. But it is just not available.”*<sup>113</sup>

## MISSOURI

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Every August, migrant workers arrive in Missouri to help harvest crops, such as melons, in the southeast region and apples on farms east of Kansas City. On Peters Orchard, family farmer Dave Peters cultivates 1,000 apples on 500 acres in Waverly, Missouri. He knows the migrant workers on his orchards to be hard-working and loyal, returning to the farm every year. Mr. Peters says, *“We rely on these people. We couldn’t survive without them.”*<sup>114</sup>

In Weston, Missouri, Dan Morgan harvests 150 acres of burley tobacco annually. The labor is dirty, tiring, and requires constant tending; tobacco workers chop the stalk of the plant, stack tobacco leaves on spears, load the spears of tobacco leaves onto trucks, and hang the stalks in barns to cure. Every acre of tobacco requires an estimated 200 hours of manual labor. Mr. Morgan says that he used to hire high school students to work his tobacco crops, but today he has trouble finding sufficient local labor. He now relies on seasonal, immigrant tobacco harvesters.<sup>115</sup>

Garold Dungy, a labor specialist in Missouri, says that he “can’t blame” local, domestic workers for not wanting to take seasonal farm jobs moving about the United States. *“You’re traveling in a mobile bunkhouse with other guys. You’re working long days, you miss your family. It is hard to get an American to do it.”* Nonetheless, Mr. Dungy says that the alternative, the H-2A guest agricultural worker program, is not functional. *“It’s not friendlier,”* he states. *“It’s costly and it’s hard to navigate and everything about it is to discourage its use.”*<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Eric Adler, “Migrant student makes most of short stay,” *The Kansas City Star*, October 6, 2003.

<sup>115</sup> Christine Metz, “Tobacco farms keep plugging,” *The Lawrence Journal-World*, September 17, 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Bickel, *Hutchinson News*, March 1, 2010.

## MONTANA

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Dave McEwen raises 700 sheep on a ranch north of Shelby, Montana. In 2008, he could not find one worker to help out during the lambing season in the summer and the shearing season in the winter. He says, “*You just can't find anybody who wants to do it,*” and as a result, Montana ranchers rely heavily on shearers from Australia and New Zealand.<sup>117</sup>

“*It's kind of lonely,*” describes Llew Jones, who raises thousands of sheep on a ranch near Conrad, Montana. His family has operated the ranch for three generations. Over the past 15 years, it was nearly impossible to hire American workers. Mr. Jones began working with experienced Chilean and Peruvian herders brought in on H-2A visas to keep his family-owned ranch properly staffed.<sup>118</sup>



*Immigrant herders tending to a flock of sheep.*

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<sup>117</sup> Erin Madison, “Storm Adds Difficulty for Dwindling Sheep Ranchers,” *Great Falls Tribune*, May 24, 2008.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

## NEBRASKA

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Farmer Todd Tuls owns Double Dutch Dairy near Shelby, Nebraska. He originally hired local workers when he first moved the dairy to Shelby, but he believes the hours, the weekends, and the night shifts ultimately drove local people away from jobs on his farm. “*We hired 95 percent local people and 5 percent Hispanics,*” he reports. “*Within six months, that had turned over... The workforce just isn't out there.*”<sup>119</sup>

Nebraskan Andrew Campbell observes that, “*Significant parts of Nebraska's economy, such as cattle and meatpacking, are dependent on a workforce largely coming from the immigrant community.*”<sup>120</sup> Mr. Campbell owns Campbell's Nurseries and Garden Center, a company founded in 1912 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The family business has grown to include over 200 acres of greenhouse, field, and nursery productions.<sup>121</sup>

Land estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show that 300,000 acres of Nebraska farmland and 1,100 Nebraska farms have closed down since 2003.<sup>122</sup> Nebraska agriculture is valued at 15.5 billion dollars, including the 7.3 billion dollar cattle industry. Nebraska farmers cultivate more than 23,000 acres of vegetables, including labor-intensive crops such as potatoes, pumpkins, sweet corn, and watermelons.<sup>123</sup>

## NEVADA

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Peri & Sons Farms is one of the largest seed-to-grocery store companies in Nevada, packing and shipping fresh market onions (white, yellow, red, sweet, and organic varieties) throughout the United States. The farm has been owned and operated by the Peri family in Yerington, Nevada, since its founding in 1979.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Bill Hord, “Ag bosses not on the fence,” *Omaha World-Herald*, June 3, 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Obtained by Craig Regelbrugge, Co-Chair, Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform, November 20, 2009

<sup>121</sup> “History,” *Campbell's Cultivating Ideas*, <http://www.campbellsnursery.com/>.

<sup>122</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Farms and Land in Farms Final Estimates 2003-2007” and “Farms, Land in Farms, and Livestock Operations 2008 Summary,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

<sup>123</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Nebraska 2009 State Agriculture Overview” and “Nebraska Vegetables, Potatoes, and Melons Harvested for Sale: 2007 and 2002,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

<sup>124</sup> Lenita Power, “Onions and the Valley,” *Reno Gazette-Journal*, November 20, 2002.

Butch Peri, who oversees the family's onion farm in Firebaugh, Nevada, says he cannot find local workers to do the labor, stooping and shoveling onions into 90-pound burlap bags. He says anecdotally, "*Kids don't wash cars anymore. They don't mow lawns,*" just like they will not do agriculture work.<sup>125</sup>

Co-owner David Peri tried to recruit workers in Nevada, California, and Arizona to harvest onions but "*it's hard work,*" he explains. "*You're bent over like that all day. It's backbreaking work.*" None of the local workers they were able to hire lasted. David Peri says, "*We'd get guys who only lasted a half day before they'd quit.*"<sup>126</sup>

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Crescent Farms in Walpole, New Hampshire, has been producing milk and dairy for 48 years. The family farm's owner, Sheldon Sawyer, relies on two immigrant workers, but he clarifies, "*It's not because they're cheaper. We get [migrant workers] because we need them.*"<sup>127</sup>

John Young is a fourth-generation farmer in New Boston, New Hampshire. He has over 46 years of experience growing apples, peaches, pumpkins, and fall vegetables. Despite having tried the "very best" to recruit American workers, Mr. Young believes there are not enough local workers to supplement the role of migrant agriculture workers in New England. He states, "*While some people would say anyone can do farm work, in reality the work is strenuous, the weather is often uncomfortable and at peak times of the year the hours long.*"<sup>128</sup>

Joseph Young, John Young's son, notices a genuine lack of local interest in farming in New England: "*There aren't workers that want to do farming... Go to any high school or college and ask them if they want to be farmers.*"<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Scherer, "Scrimmage on the Border," *Foundation for National Progress*, July 2005.

<sup>126</sup> Power, November 20, 2002.

<sup>127</sup> Jenna Russell, "On New England's dairy farms, foreign workers find a home," *Boston Globe*, September 22, 2007.

<sup>128</sup> Testimony of John Young, "Hearing on: Do Federal Programs Ensure U.S. Workers Are Recruited First Before Employees Hire From Abroad?" *U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor*, May 6, 2008.

<sup>129</sup> Boynton, May 4, 2007.

One reason for the labor shortage is that there are fewer young people in New England, says Mr. Young, which means fewer people who are physically able to take manual labor jobs. Moreover, the seasonal nature of agricultural work makes farming unappealing to Americans in the long-term, even in areas with high unemployment.<sup>130</sup>

*“My experience in New England and other areas of the country demonstrates that there are very few unemployed who will accept agricultural work,”* reflects Mr. Young. *“Despite advertising, contacts with any former employees, placing a job offer in local as well as interstate recruitment and now also electronic placement, few and usually no workers are interested in employment.”*<sup>131</sup>

Without immigrant workers, a 2008 study shows that 35 to 45 farms and 22,000 acres of cropland in New Hampshire could go out of business.<sup>132</sup> The closure of these farms could jeopardize up to 632 on-farm jobs and 4,385 off-farm jobs in the state. A significant farm labor shortage would impact up to 40 percent of New Hampshire’s agriculture industry, worth 58 million dollars annually.<sup>133</sup>

## NEW JERSEY

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Patricia Swider’s family has been in farming for three generations. Her farm, Godlewsky Farms, is known for producing celery and onion crops, in addition to cabbage, lettuce, chicory, escarole, carrots, beets, spinach, and peppers. Ms. Swider has had trouble finding even a handful of workers to staff the nursery. She says, *“It’s very hard [finding farm workers] because no one really wants to go out - it’s pretty labor intensive. It’s always been a difficult thing. Now it’s almost becoming impossible.”*<sup>134</sup>

Organic farmer Torrey Reade co-owns Neptune Farm, a 126-acre farm once owned by Quakers in the 17th century. Neptune Farm has been certified organic since 1992 and today specializes in grass-fed beef, lamb, eggs, and produce.

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<sup>130</sup> Testimony of John Young, May 6, 2008.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> “Farm Labor and Immigration Reform: Economic Impact to New Hampshire State Agriculture,” *First Pioneer Farm Credit and Yankee Farm Credit*, 2008.

<sup>133</sup> Testimony of John Young, May 6, 2008.

<sup>134</sup> Lynn Olanoff, “Farm labor pool all but dried up: Tougher immigrant rules leave farmers without many options when trying to harvest,” *The Express-Times*, April 7, 2008.

Ms. Reade and her co-owner take turns performing the hard manual labor it takes to harvest some of their produce, like asparagus. *“There’s no way to mechanically harvest asparagus,”* she says. *“It’s fragile. It breaks. The tips need to be respected. You can’t really bash it around.”*<sup>135</sup>

Asparagus is picked during an eight-week harvest, and harvesters today still use techniques that were utilized in centuries past, using hands and a knife. *“It’s a terrible job,”* says Ms. Reade. *“It’s stoop labor. It’s back-breaking. You’re bending over all day.”*<sup>136</sup>

In Blairstown, New Jersey, the lack of labor is a cause of anxiety for local farmer, Doug Race, who owns Race Farm. He is thankful for the few legal migrant farm workers who have been willing to help grow the broccoli, cabbage, pumpkins, and other fruits and vegetables on his 100 acres. *“You just hope the government is going to work out a realistic opportunity to get migrants in,”* he states. *“There’s no farming without them. If the source dries up, so does the farmer.”*<sup>137</sup>

Godlewsky Farms, Neptune Farms, and Race Farm are not the only local farms with a stake in agricultural labor issues. More than 500 New Jersey farms, amounting to 155,554 acres of cropland, could go out of business or could be forced to scale back operations without immigrant labor. These farms generate 475 million dollars in agricultural receipts for New Jersey. Their closure would jeopardize an estimated 6,200 on-farm jobs and over 19,300 off-farm jobs in agricultural services, input, processing, and marketing.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Patricia Talorico, “Asparagus stands tall,” *The News Journal*, May 14, 2003.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Olanoff, April 7, 2008.

<sup>138</sup> “Farm Labor and Immigration Reform: Economic Impact to New Jersey State Agriculture,” *First Pioneer Farm Credit*, February 2008.

## NEW MEXICO

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New Mexico is home to approximately 17,000 acres of chili pepper crops – 40 percent of the crops are red chilies, 30 percent are green peppers, and 30 percent are cayenne peppers. While most red chilies can be harvested by machines, almost all green and cayenne peppers are harvested by hand.<sup>139</sup>

Shayne Franzoy is the owner of a 200-acre chili farm in Hatch, New Mexico, which is known locally as the “Chile Capital of the World.” Mr. Franzoy observes that the economic recession has not improved the availability of local chili harvesters; he says, *“Even with the unemployment numbers we’re seeing today, the truth is we still can’t find enough field workers... My goal is to always employ Americans first, but without immigrants, my business simply can’t survive during the busy harvest season... I need a way to hire foreign workers legally.”*<sup>140</sup>

Rick Ledbetter sells his chili peppers at local farmers markets in Clovis and Portales, New Mexico. He has been growing chili for seven years, but he reports that finding people to harvest the chilies every summer is a serious problem. As he says, *“Foreign countries are putting a lot of pressure on chili growers here in New Mexico... They are able to use cheap labor while we are having trouble finding harvest labor here in the [United States].”* Mr. Ledbetter says mechanization is not an option for chili farmers because harvesters have to visually discern between mature and immature chilies on the plant.<sup>141</sup>

Farmers are planting less chili crops to deal with the shortage of field workers, according to Paul Funk, an agricultural engineer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. National statistics show that red and green chili acreage declined from 20,000 acres in 2000 to 11,100 acres in 2008. Mr. Funk speculates: *“The main difference between production costs is not land or inputs; it’s the labor to harvest. Growers cannot find the people and cannot afford those they find, to harvest chilies by hand in this country.”*<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> “Farm Labor Shortages,” *Rural Migration News*, University of California, Davis, September 2007.

<sup>140</sup> Gene Baca, Alex Romero and Carol Wright, “Fix immigration so it works for New Mexico,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, April 13, 2010.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas Garcia, “Chili crop checked by available labor,” *Portales News-Tribune*, August 12, 2008.

<sup>142</sup> Cary Blake, “Green chili industry focuses on systematic approach,” *Southwest Farm Press*, April 16, 2009.

## NEW YORK

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Ed Schoen is a third-generation milk farmer in upstate New York. He milks 180 cows on his farm, Schoen-Acres. He indicates that the dairy industry is in trouble. *“We need a stable supply of labor,”* said Mr. Schoen in July 2009. *“The dairy industry’s survival depends on it. Worrying about workers is another layer of stress we don’t need.”*<sup>143</sup>



*Two employees work in a double parallel milking parlor located on a 2,000 cow farm in western New York.*

In 2008, Jim Bittner, of Appleton, New York, was forced to cut down a quarter of his cherry and peach trees because of a lack of workers to hand pick the fruit. He cut down 25 acres of his cherry orchards and 20 acres of his peach orchards; some of trees he chopped down had been planted 30 years prior.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> M. Jordan, July 30, 2009.

<sup>144</sup> Joshua Brustein, “With Migrant Workers in Short Supply, a Farmer Looks to Machines,” *New York Times*, May 27, 2008.

Mr. Bittner runs Singer Farms, established in 1915 near the shores of Lake Ontario. The farm grows apples, peaches, cherries, plums, apricots, pears, and quince. In 1998, Mr. Bittner received the award of “Outstanding Young Farmer” by the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. Today, however, Mr. Bittner explains: “*We can find tractor drivers, people who apply pesticide and truck drivers, but we can’t find people to do the harvest.*”<sup>145</sup>

Apple farmers Phil and Chris Wagner in Wayne County, New York, say that their orchards have gone unattended due to a shortage of seasonal workers. “*There will be thousands of bushels of apples that won’t even get picked in New York State this year,*” said Phil Wagner in 2009. “*The fruit’s not going to wait.*”<sup>146</sup>

Eric and Robert Brown are brothers who grow apples and fruit on orchards and berry patches in Orleans County, New York. The Browns believe the current state of the H-2A labor program has caused “havoc” for New York farmers. The brothers hire approximately 12 workers to cultivate plants and harvest berries and stone fruits during the summer, as well as 30 workers to pick apples in the fall.<sup>147</sup> Robert Brown indicates that local workers do not want those harvesting jobs. He says, “*They certainly don’t want to bend over and work.*”<sup>148</sup>

Robert Brown believes that immigrant workers do not get enough credit for their dedication to growing and harvesting America’s fruits and vegetables. “*Year after year, workers from Mexico and Jamaica have proven they want the jobs, they take pride in how they do them and work hard,*” he says. The Brown family supports reforms of the H-2A seasonal labor program to make sure that American farmers can bring in workers “*to do the work that the people of this country don’t want to do.*”<sup>149</sup>

Without immigrant workers, an estimated 34,000 acres of farmland could close down on Long Island, New York. Agriculture is a 1 billion dollar industry and supports over 10,000 local jobs on Long Island. Joe Gergela, of the Long Island Farm Bureau, estimates that, “*The viability of Long Island’s agricultural industry depends on an immigrant workforce... Do we want to import our workers or import our food? Every time a farm goes...it’s not coming back.*”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Rathke, May 10, 2010.

<sup>146</sup> Theresa Vargas, “A Harvest Ripe with Tension,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 2009.

<sup>147</sup> Diana Louise Carter, “Delay in reform irks area farmers,” *ImmigrationWorks USA*, March 25, 2009.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Carolyn Kormann, “Officials focus on immigration’s impact on East End economy,” *East Hampton Press*, June 2, 2009.

Statewide in New York, 832 farms and 750,000 acres of cropland would be in jeopardy without immigrant labor. The loss of these farms would impact more than 22,000 New York jobs.<sup>151</sup>

## NORTH CAROLINA

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Jerome Vick has grown sweet potatoes, tobacco, and cotton on a family farm in Wilson, North Carolina, since 1975. He cultivates 5,000 acres and relies on 250 workers during the peak season. His family has received national and state awards for their work in agriculture.<sup>152</sup> Mr. Vick is one of hundreds of North Carolina farmers who use the H-2A seasonal labor program to find agricultural workers. Mr. Vick says, “[Americans] don't want to do this kind of work... We're trying to hire people now, people who live in the area, but they are very hard to come by.”<sup>153</sup>

Migrant farm workers on H-2A visas also support Doug Torn, who has built his 70-acre nursery, Buds & Blooms Nursery, over three decades. At any one time, Buds & Blooms Nursery grows an average of one million plants in Guilford County, North Carolina.<sup>154</sup>

Mr. Torn calculates that imports of foreign produce would increase without immigrant workers; he states, “Americans today don't want to sweat and get their hands dirty. We have a choice. Do we want to import our food or do we want to import our labor?”<sup>155</sup>

The regulatory approach to reforming the H-2A labor program has made it difficult for North Carolina farmers like Mr. Torn to recruit guest workers, when a local workforce is not available. Mr. Torn explains, “The H-2A program is a very complicated program that needs a good overhaul. It seems every year or two, they are making changes to it, which only adds complication to it.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> “Farm Labor and Immigration Reform: Economic Impact to New York State Agriculture,” *Farm Credit Associations of New York*, February 2008.

<sup>152</sup> “About Our Operation,” *Vick Family Farms*, <http://www.vickfamilyfarms.com>.

<sup>153</sup> John Murawski and Kristin Collins, “Flu delays migrant workers,” *News & Observer*, May 3, 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Manuel Quinones, “Employers wait for immigrant labor reform,” *Capitol News Connection*, April 15, 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Kristin Collins and Barbara Barrett, “Immigration defeat threatens N.C. crops” *News & Observer*, June 9, 2007.

<sup>156</sup> Quinones, April 15, 2010.

Harry Yates, the owner of Yates Christmas Trees & Landscaping, grows Christmas trees in the rugged Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina. His farm has been in business since 1975 and now consists of approximately 300 acres. Mr. Yates says that Christmas tree growers strongly support reforms of the H-2A program. *“It is too expensive. It is too complicated,”* he states, *“It is too slow, and it is too likely to land you in court.”*<sup>157</sup>

Mr. Yates believes that seasonal, labor-intensive industries like Christmas trees would not exist without guest workers. *“Christmas trees are an extremely labor intensive agricultural crop,”* he describes. *“Each tree receives eight to ten visits per year from a farm worker for the 8 to 10 year life cycle of that tree. Each activity requires physical labor and challenging geographic conditions. These challenges, along with the seasonality of the job, mean the Christmas tree industry must have guest workers.”*<sup>158</sup>

In 2010, the North Carolina Farm Bureau initiated a short-term recruiting program to test the availability of local workers in a down economy. Larry Wooten of the Farm Bureau explains the results: *“We put an 800 number on the airwaves saying, if you want to work in agriculture call this 800 number. You know how many takers we got? About four.”*<sup>159</sup>



*Workers load a truck trailer with Christmas trees.*

<sup>157</sup> Harry Yates, Testimony before the House Agriculture Committee, October 4, 2007.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Quinones, April 15, 2010.

## NORTH DAKOTA

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Zac Browning co-owns Browning's Honey Co., a family honey company founded five generations prior in 1921. The company survived the Great Depression and World War II, and today is one of the largest honey producers in the United States, with honey farms in Jamestown, North Dakota, as well as in Idaho, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Mr. Browning says that his North Dakota farms include about 12,000 hives and produce about 900 tons of honey every year, but that the work of beekeeping "*is just not that pleasant.*" Beekeepers work long hours, visiting hives every two weeks, feeding and inspecting the bees, converting raw honey into the certified product sold in U.S. stores, and melting the wax in hot facilities. Mr. Browning says at least one-third of the staff on Browning's Honey Co. is foreign born, many South African, hired through the H-2A seasonal labor program.<sup>160</sup>

Demographic changes, such as slowing population growth, have contributed to the agricultural labor shortage in North Dakota. Orville Tranby, who runs a family farm in Cooperstown, North Dakota, states, "*We simply don't have enough workers.*"<sup>161</sup> Lee Zimmerman, owner of Sandhills Dairy in Towner, North Dakota, reiterates this view, saying that recruiting local farm workers has failed. He states, "*We could run ads in the newspaper for a month, and receive no applications.*"<sup>162</sup>

## OHIO

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Mark Guess, the owner of Groco Family Farms, used to produce zucchini, squash, cucumbers, green peppers, and eggplants on 600 acres in Xenia, Ohio. His peak labor demands ran between the months of May and September. In 2009, he petitioned for workers through the H-2A seasonal worker program to fill positions for which he could not hire locally. As the spring planting and harvesting approached, however, Mr. Guess still was waiting on nearly half of the H-2A workers. At the time, Mr. Guess said, "*We're not going to be able to grow many vegetables without workers.*"<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ben Rodgers, "Honey producers use traveling laborers," *The Jamestown Sun*, June 4, 2009.

<sup>161</sup> Kathy Kiely, "Can aging N.D. resist change amid immigration debate?" *USA Today*, November 26, 2007.

<sup>162</sup> Jim Dickrell, "ICE sends chilling message," *Ag Web*, June 16, 2007.

<sup>163</sup> Christopher Magan, "Farmer fears flu scare will reduce migrant labor force; A grower says travel restrictions keep guest workers in Mexico," *Dayton Daily News*, May 2, 2009.

Mr. Guess decided to abandon his vegetable crops in January 2010. Mr. Guess explains that labor was a central factor in his decision to give up vegetables. In a letter he stated, *“The lack of availability of a high-quality labor force is another reason we made this decision... increasing government regulations has made it harder to get the labor needed on time and ready to work.”*<sup>164</sup>

Willoway Nurseries has been in business in northern Ohio since 1954. Cathy Kowalczyk, vice president of Willoway Nurseries, says that immigrant workers are keeping her company in business. She states, *“We could not get a stable work force locally and reliably without the migrants.”*<sup>165</sup>

Dave Geary, a manager on Willoway Nurseries, explains that workers on Ohio nurseries must be able to weather harsh conditions, including sleet, snow, and freezing rain, because nursery plants require cultivation at all times of the year. Mr. Geary says, *“The biggest thing for us is [that] they are stable workers, and [that] we get a type of person who really understands the work... You really have to be used to working in the elements. That’s the difficult part of it.”*<sup>166</sup>

Willoway Nurseries has attempted to recruit local workers, including high school students, but their full-time nursery jobs have gone unfilled. Although general nursery workers on this Ohio farm earn a starting wage of \$9.93 per hour, the workforce is not available locally. Emily Jalkanen, another nursery manager on Willoway, says, *“We cannot get 250 local, domestic workers to do these jobs.”*<sup>167</sup>

## OKLAHOMA

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Bob Ramming of Hinton, Oklahoma, grew watermelons as his primary crop on Ramming Produce Inc. for over 15 years. In 2008, to deal with severe labor shortages, Mr. Ramming abandoned his farm’s 300-acre watermelon crop and replaced it with wheat and soybeans, which can be harvested by machines.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Letter from Mark Guess, *Groco Family Farms*, January 25, 2010.

<sup>165</sup> Cory Frolick, “Guest workers: they’re here legally to do what we won’t,” *Sandusky Register*, September 22, 2008.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Todd Jones, “Jobs in the balance: Do illegal workers help or hurt U.S. economy?” *Columbus Dispatch*, September 8, 2008.

*“You cannot get American citizens to do this kind of work,” Mr. Ramming explained of his decision to forgo watermelons. “You can advertise and do whatever you want, but they’re not going to work out in the fields, in the heat.”*<sup>169</sup>

## OREGON

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Camille Hukari cultivates fruit and flowers on a 45-acre farm in Hood River, Oregon. Ms. Hukari’s family has grown orchards in Hood River for four generations, starting with her great-grandfathers, who both moved to the region in 1905. Ms. Hukari has been farming since 1983. Today, she grows Bartlett, Golden Bosc, and Stark Crimson pears, heirloom apples, table grapes, strawberries, blueberries, and seeded flowers such as zinnias, sunflowers, and dahlias.<sup>170</sup>

Ms. Hukari says that having a useable agricultural guest worker program is a *“matter of life and death”* for her farm, named the Gorge White House. In 2007, she said, *“This year the workers were just not available... I know from talking to growers in other parts of the country that we’re not the only ones who had problems.”*<sup>171</sup>

Lynne Jenson, an onion and potato specialist at Oregon State University, indicates that farmers have had to change the way in which they grow crops to deal with the labor crisis. She says, *“People are struggling to make do with fewer people. They’re using more herbicides, trying to make it work without the hand labor.”* Ms. Jensen observes that labor problems have been especially acute in eastern Oregon, where 25 percent of America’s onions are grown.<sup>172</sup>

Don Nusom, who grows cherries near Gervais, Oregon, and pays on average \$11 to \$12 an hour to his agriculture workers, says that immigrants are the only ones picking cherries on his farm. He says, *“Our entire labor supply is pretty much immigration.”* Terry Drazdoff, a cherry farmer in Polk County, Oregon, said in 2006 that he only had enough farm workers to pick six tons of cherries, instead of the usual 25 tons that are picked on his orchards.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> “Our History,” *The Gorge White House*, <http://www.thegorgewhitehouse.com/>.

<sup>171</sup> Jill Morrison, “Farmers questions lawmakers on ag issues,” *Public Broadcasting*, January 3, 2007.

<sup>172</sup> Esmeralda Bermudez, “Oregon agriculture faces migrant crackdowns,” *The Oregonian*, June 22, 2008.

<sup>173</sup> “Oregon Cherry Pickers Say Border Patrols Bad for Business,” *Associated Press*, June 29, 2008.



*Workers gather trees to be hauled away by helicopter to the freight yard on a Christmas tree farm in Oregon.*

John Aguirre, of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, asserts that the root of the farm labor crisis is an unfeasible agricultural guest worker program. He says, *“One of our pivotal issues is a guest worker program which allows our industry to utilize immigrant guest workers.”* Oregon’s agriculture industry, supported by 40,000 local farms, generates 4 billion dollars for the economy every year.<sup>174</sup>

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

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Rod Hissong co-owns a dairy in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, where he milks 1,600 cows, raises 1,400 heifers, and farms 1,800 acres of land. His farm produces 42 million pounds of milk annually for U.S. dairy consumer products. His dairy also supports over 170 agricultural jobs and generates 22 million dollars of economic activity regionally.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Rebecca Lacey, “An eye on the future: Director of Oregon Association of Nurseries finds much to like in the agenda of President-elect Obama,” *The Oregonian*, November 7, 2008.

<sup>175</sup> Testimony of Rodney Hissong, *House Agriculture Committee*, April 20, 2010.

Mr. Hissong states, “*Dairymen are desperately in need of a workable guest worker program for agriculture. Many Americans are unwilling to work the jobs that dairy farms have to offer... Without them, the work of feeding our nation would come to a screeching halt.*”<sup>176</sup>

Keith Eckel used to grow 700 acres of tomatoes on a farm in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. In March 2008, he closed down his family tomato farm because he could not find enough workers. In previous harvests, Mr. Eckel hired 110 people to work in his fields, most of them migrant Hispanic workers. He explains, “*Many of [our workers] have come to our same farm for 25 years... These people do extremely hard work and are doing jobs that our local people will not or care not do, and that would include myself... They are critical to our process. Without those harvesters, we're out of business.*”<sup>177</sup>

The Eckel family farm used to be the largest producer of fresh market tomatoes in Pennsylvania. In the height of the summer harvest, workers on the farm each hand-picked 10,000 tomatoes a day.<sup>178</sup> Mr. Eckel’s tomato crop was valued at 1.5 to 2 million dollars and supplied an estimated 75 percent of all the tomatoes sold in markets between Washington, D.C., and Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>179</sup>



*A Christmas tree farm worker in Pennsylvania uses a pruning tool on trees taller than six feet.*

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> “Immigration’s Fallout: Fewer Fresh Tomatoes?” *National Public Radio*, March 26, 2008.

<sup>178</sup> Paul Vitello, “Immigration Issues End a Pennsylvania Grower’s Season,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2008.

<sup>179</sup> Nancy Petersen, “Major Pa. tomato producer quits, blames Congress” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 2008.

## RHODE ISLAND

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Raymond Polenso has owned Pippin Apple Orchard for 33 years. He is frustrated that he cannot find reliable local labor to work his 20-acre orchard in Cranston, Rhode Island. *“Local help? Forget about it,”* he states. *“You can’t get no local help these days to pick apples.”*<sup>180</sup>

Bruce Vanicek is the fourth-generation owner of Rhode Island Nurseries, a 500-acre farm in Middletown, Rhode Island. Mr. Vanicek has essentially given up hope on recruiting local field laborers, saying, *“We don’t even advertise for employment opportunities much anymore because we really get no response... We’ll get people in off the street sometimes who apply for a job. We’ll say, ‘Great, come in next Monday,’ and most never show.”* Mr. Vanicek counters the argument that Americans will not work in the fields because of low wages. He pays 3.50 above state minimum wage, in addition to overtime pay after 40 hours, nine paid holidays, and retirement benefits.<sup>181</sup>

Allan Hill’s family has operated Hill Orchards in Johnston, Rhode Island, since 1929. During the 1960s, the apple farm found enough pickers locally, because the workers also had three-shift mill jobs and could pick apples before and after work at the mills, being paid by the bushel. Today, the mills are closed, and Hill Orchards relies on the H-2A program to fill the jobs not taken by local workers. Mr. Hill explains, *“The problem is it’s part-time work... Who wants to work a few weeks a year? The other problem is it’s hard work.”*<sup>182</sup>

Rhode Island farmers who grow potato, pumpkin, sweet corn, apple, and other labor-intensive crops have helped agriculture grow to be a 65 million dollar industry in the State.<sup>183</sup> Ken Lagerquist, executive director of the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association, asserts that without migrant workers, at least a few Rhode Island companies would be *“seriously out of business.”*<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Tom Mooney, “The Immigration Debate Ripens,” *The Providence Journal*, September 2, 2007.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “State Level Data: Rhode Island,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, 2007.

<sup>184</sup> Mooney, September 2, 2007.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

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Titan Farms, in Ridge Spring, South Carolina, started out as a 1,800-acre peach farm and has grown to include over 4,000 acres of peaches, 300 acres of bell pepper, and 275 acres of broccoli. Titan Farms relies on seasonal labor, including 45 harvesters in the fall and winter and over 400 workers in the summer. In the last year, less than 40 local American workers – approximately 10 percent of the farm’s full labor needs – filled out applications for harvesting jobs. Only 3 of these local workers are still on the job.<sup>185</sup>

*“It’s too hard,”* says owner Chalmers Carr of the pruning, thinning, and hand-harvesting required on his peach farm. During the summer, farm workers must be willing to endure the Southern humidity and heat, and during the winter, they have to work early mornings in below-freezing conditions. Mr. Carr says that the seasonal nature of peach harvesting requires that workers are available on a timely basis. He says, *“If you have three fields ripening at the same time, you have to keep going or you’ll lose the crop.”*<sup>186</sup>

*“The work that we do is very physical, hand and stoop labor, with little opportunity for mechanization,”* explains L. Payton Parsons of the labor on his nursery. Parsons Nursery was started by his father, Louis Parsons, in 1959 in Georgetown, South Carolina. The nursery has always been family-owned and operated, raising trees, shrubs, and perennials on 200 acres. L. Payton Parsons says, *“Despite soaring unemployment in our area, we are unable to find Americans to work on our farms. We need about 50 seasonal and full time field workers throughout the year.”*<sup>187</sup>

Tony DiMare’s family has been in farming since 1949. Mr. DiMare is concerned that labor problems are shifting U.S. agricultural production to other countries. His company, DiMare Fresh, grows tomatoes, citrus, melons, and vegetables in South Carolina, as well as in Florida and California. Mr. DiMare says, *“We as a country cannot allow the loss of our fresh vegetable market and row crop industry to foreign competition such as Mexico because we have failed to implement a workable guest worker program.”*<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Julia Sellers, “Migrant workers harvest job security,” *The Augusta Chronicle*, May 15, 2010.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Obtained by Craig Regelbrugge, Co-Chair, Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform, November 9, 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Obtained by Craig Regelbrugge, Co-Chair, Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform, November 6, 2009.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

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Dan and Wanda Dunn own a dairy farm in western South Dakota that runs 24 hours a day and employs eight full-time farm workers. The jobs are broken down into day and night positions, with workers rotating between shifts each month; for these jobs, Mr. and Mrs. Dunn say, *“We have had to rely upon immigrant labor.”* In a letter to the House Agriculture Committee, the Dunns explain why: *“Our largest problem is that when we try to find help, we cannot get anyone to apply for the position. We have put ads in the local newspaper, and the jobs are listed with a job service, and still, we do not get anyone to apply. Generally, when we do get someone to apply, they are unreliable, do not have good work ethics, and have an undesirable background.”*<sup>189</sup>

Raising dairy calves on Roger Hills Farm in Veblen, South Dakota, is *“very physical hands-on work,”* says owner Jay Hill. Every day, thirty newborn calves arrive on the farm, requiring workers to feed calves by bottle during their first few weeks for 16 hours a day. Mr. Hill has been unable to expand his business because he does not have sufficient labor; he says, *“My community suffers from the lack of a workforce that is young and able to work in the livestock industry. There are few residents that are under 40 years of age. Our school had to consolidate 4 years ago due to lack of children. The majority of the people in my community are retired senior citizens.”*<sup>190</sup>

Mr. Hill disputes the argument that Americans will not take agricultural jobs because the pay is too low; he says, *“Perhaps you think I don’t pay well, or I’ve never advertised for help. That’s not true. I’ve advertised with job service and word of mouth, to no avail. My employees earn 30,000 dollars or more a year. The pay scale is not what keeps [local workers] away.”*<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Letter from Dan and Wanda Dunn, “Hearing to Review the Labor Needs of American Agriculture,” *U.S. House Committee on Agriculture*, October 4, 2007.

<sup>190</sup> Letter from Jay Hill, “Hearing to Review the Labor Needs of American Agriculture,” *U.S. House Committee on Agriculture*, October 4, 2007.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

Mr. Hill has tried to use the H-2A seasonal labor program, even though he needs workers all year round and H-2A guest workers are required to return to their home countries soon after they build the necessary dairy labor skills. *“Hogs, dairy, beef feedlots and livestock processing all have year-round labor needs,”* he explains. *“Many of these jobs take training and experience they gain with several months of work. I find I spend half that time training them, only to have the visa expire and they need to leave. Then, I start the process over.”*<sup>192</sup>

Denny Pherson, a grain and livestock farmer in Veblen, South Dakota, says that his custom harvest business began 55 years ago under his grandfather. In 2007, Mr. Pherson’s son had to transfer part of his operation to Oklahoma because he could not find a full crew. *“For the past five years, we have been unable to find enough seasonal farm labor to keep our farm business going,”* he says. *“We now have to depend on H-2A visa labor, and most of them come from South Africa. Some of our competitors are hiring H-2A labor from Europe. Not many years ago, our labor force consisted of high school and college age young people. They are no longer interested in the physical outdoors jobs we need to fill.”*<sup>193</sup>

Farmer Howard Manlove is concerned that the American dairy industry cannot sustain itself without H-2A visa reforms. He says, *“An H-2A temporary worker program does not work for an agricultural industry that harvests milk 24 / 7 / 365.”* Mr. Manlove works as a manager on a 2,000-acre farm in eastern South Dakota; he predicts, *“If we cannot find a legal source of quality employees to work on our farms, this modern and efficient dairy industry will cease to exist as we know it today. We offer good pay and benefits but U.S. workers are rarely, if ever, interested in working on a dairy farm.”*<sup>194</sup>

Approximately 100,000 acres of South Dakota farmland have closed down since 2003, according to land usage data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>195</sup> The South Dakota agriculture industry generates 6.5 billion dollars for the economy and includes labor-intensive crops such as potatoes, grapes, watermelon, sweet corn, pumpkin, and cantaloupe.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Letter from Danny Pherson, “Hearing to Review the Labor Needs of American Agriculture,” *U.S. House Committee on Agriculture*, October 4, 2007.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Farms and Land in Farms Final Estimates 2003-2007,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

<sup>196</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, “South Dakota 2009 State Agriculture Overview” and “South Dakota Vegetables, Potatoes, and Melons Harvested for Sale: 2007 and 2002,” *U.S. Department of Agriculture*.

## TENNESSEE

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Tennessee farmer Wayne Scott has been growing strawberries, green beans, sweet corn, and tomatoes on a farm in Unicoi, Tennessee, since 1958. Years ago, it was easy to find local workers to plant and harvest his crops. Today, Mr. Scott says that, “*Local people just don’t apply for jobs on the farm.*” The 550 acres of crops on Scott’s Strawberry and Tomato Farms are cultivated by approximately 220 migrant workers, who begin the season picking strawberries in May and then harvest tomatoes through October. Mr. Scott believes that the seasonality of these farm jobs turns people away; he says, “*Most local workers have to make a choice: Either work only part of a year on a farm, or work year-round in a factory.*”<sup>197</sup>

Ray and Emily Tidwell grow strawberries, blueberries, and peaches near Spring City, Tennessee. Their farm, Tidwell’s Berry Farm, is small, family-owned, and includes about 16 acres of strawberries. The harvest is labor intensive; about 20,000 strawberries should be harvested from each acre. Ms. Tidwell says, “*Not many people want to be bent over picking strawberries all day.*” As a result, their farm relies largely on seasonal harvesters from Mexico.<sup>198</sup>

Labor availability is also a critical issue for tobacco growers in Tennessee, says Paul Denton, a burley tobacco specialist at the University of Tennessee. He explains, “*When a grower gets his tobacco crop in the field and sees he will have a crop to harvest, he should already be lining up his harvesting crew.*”<sup>199</sup>

## TEXAS

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J. Allen Carnes, a third-generation farmer, runs Winter Garden Produce and Carnes Farms in Uvalde, Texas. Since 1950, he has been growing onions, melons, lettuce, cabbage, and broccoli. Mr. Carnes observes that the labor crisis is driving farmers in south Texas to grow crops across the border. He says, “*Farmers have dropped out or moved to Mexico, where labor is not an issue.*”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Jake Herron, “Migrant workers help on local farms,” *El Nuevo Record*, September 27, 2008.

<sup>198</sup> Ryan Harris, “Berries rooted in tradition: County’s crops diversify, but strawberry legacy cemented in festival,” *Herald News*, May 8, 2009.

<sup>199</sup> Wayne Harr, “Labor shortage plagues harvest of burley acres,” *Southern Farmer*, March 2007.

<sup>200</sup> Miriam Jordan, “Immigrants Turn to Farm Work Amid Building Bust,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 13, 2008.

In the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas, cattle rancher Betty Perez observes that American students looking for summer jobs will not work in hot fields. She says, *"It's hard work in the hot sun. Americans just don't want to do it anymore."*<sup>201</sup>

Cattle rancher Bennie Bock in New Braunfels, Texas, acknowledges public concerns about immigration, but he says the economic reality on Texas farms tells a different story. He states, *"People don't want these workers taking Americans jobs, and I understand that. But the problem is, whether here legally or illegally, these people are doing the work that Americans won't."*<sup>202</sup>

Mandujano Brothers Produce is a 2,800-acre farm in Cayanosa, Texas. Owner Armando Mandujano says the most labor-demanding crop he grows is cantaloupes, which have a short shelf-life and must be picked constantly during the height of the harvest.<sup>203</sup> As a result, he has reduced his cantaloupe plantings and replaced them with crops like cotton, hay, and certain varieties of onions and peppers, which require less hand labor. *"I love growing cantaloupes,"* he says, *"But there are too many issues."* In 2008, Mandujano Brothers decided not to plant cantaloupes for commercial production.<sup>204</sup>

Parr Rossen, an economist with Texas A&M University, describes the labor shortages on Texas cantaloupe farms as "acute." In 2008, Texas cantaloupe farms experienced a loss of 219 jobs and \$400,000 in economic losses as a result of labor shortages. *"We've seen some fairly major shortages in field labor the past couple of seasons,"* reflects Mr. Rossen. *"Some producers might find themselves looking at switching to less labor-intensive crops... They could possibly move operations out of Texas into production areas of Mexico."*<sup>205</sup>

Approximately 77 percent of Texas fruit and vegetable producers have scaled back their U.S. operations due to labor shortages, according to a 2008 report by researchers at Texas A&M University. More than one-quarter of Texas growers say they have already invested in production outside the United States, and 27 percent have considered going out of business as a result of labor instability.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ed Stoddard, "U.S. Agriculture Dependent on Migrant Workers," *Reuters*, July 24, 2007.

<sup>202</sup> Chris Cobb, "New rule: Hire Americans first," *New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung*, February 17, 2010.

<sup>203</sup> Geoff Folsom, "Cantaloupe community rebounds," *Odessa American*, June 6, 2009.

<sup>204</sup> "Fuel costs, labor shortages squashing cantaloupe harvest," *Pecos Enterprise*, May 27, 2008.

<sup>205</sup> Texas AgriLife Extension Service, "Lack of Immigrant Reform Program Could Deepen Farm Labor Shortage Woes," *Texas A&M University*, February 18, 2008.

<sup>206</sup> Parr Rosson, Flynn Adcock, Marco Palma and Luis Ribera, "Hired Labor Use in the Texas Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Industry," *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension System*, April 2008.



*An immigrant worker moves a herd of sheep.*

## UTAH

Mark Gibbons, of L.C. Gibbons Brothers Dairy in Lewiston, Utah, says that agriculture producers in Utah need a guest worker program. *“Today’s young people don’t want to do hard labor,”* he admits. *“There are more attractive jobs today than milking cows. We need a stable and adequate labor force provided through a guest worker program.”*<sup>207</sup>

On Delta Egg Farm in Delta, Utah, operator Scott Patton says, *“For about five years now, we’ve been short on labor every single day.”* Without egg workers, Mr. Patton estimates that the price of the eggs his farm produces will rise because production costs will increase. *“We’re going to have to mechanize some positions... We don’t want to; it’s going to cost a lot more, and that price is going to be passed on to the consumer.”*<sup>208</sup>

Randy Parker of the Utah Farm Bureau heard from one Utah rancher in June 2010 who reported that 300 of his lambs had died because the immigrant workers he was expecting to arrive on H-2A visas were delayed by 30 days during a critical lambing period.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>207</sup> “The Ag Effect: Farming in Utah Faces Drastic Changes,” February 1, 2008.

<sup>208</sup> Jeremy Twitchell, “Immigrant needs, woes: Cannon meets in Utah about the AgJobs bill,” *The Deseret News*, April 12, 2007.

<sup>209</sup> Robert Gehrke, “Immigration question: Bust them or employ them,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 21, 2010.

Mark Knold, the chief economist for the Utah Department of Workforce Services, acknowledges the need for reforming the agricultural guest worker program. He says, *“We’re not letting them (migrant workers) come in legally in the volume that the economy is asking in the labor force.”*<sup>210</sup>

## VERMONT

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Clement Gervais owns and operates 2,500 acres on Gervais Family Farms, a dairy located in Bakersfield, Vermont. His family has been producing dairy for over 50 years and maintains 950 milking cows. Even though his workers are paid \$10 to \$12 per hour, Mr. Gervais says, *“There’s not enough people that want to do it. That’s the real, true issue... I mean there’s good Americans that can milk, but there’s not enough of them that can and want to.”*<sup>211</sup>

Jake Guest is the owner of Killdeer Farm, an organic strawberry and vegetable farm in Norwich, Vermont. He believes, *“The problem is that the kind of work that these guys do, people don’t want to do it.”* The farm relies on highly experienced and skilled Jamaican workers to harvest strawberries and weed the fields, but Mr. Guest reports that constant regulatory changes have made the H-2A program more difficult to use. Mr. Guest says anecdotally, *“If you’ve got a sink drain that doesn’t work, you don’t hire a college student to fix it... You hire a plumber. If you’ve got strawberries to pick, you hire a professional picker.”*<sup>212</sup>

Jerry and Cheryl Connor, the family owners of Morgan Hill Farm, a 130-cow dairy in Bridport, Vermont, cannot find enough local laborers to milk their cows. Mr. Connor says the farm *“used to get high school kids, but they can earn more at McDonald’s than on a farm... It’s a tough situation... They’re working seven days a week, like I do.”* Morgan Hill Farm used to have 500 cows, but today they only milk 130 cows.<sup>213</sup> Mrs. Connor says that Vermont’s well-known dairy industry would not exist without immigrants. *“Dairy would cease to exist in this state without migrant workers,”* she states. *“Migrant workers are helping to keep our small family farms, the ones that buy from the local hardware and feed stores and make Vermont look like Vermont.”*<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Sheena Mcfarland, “Study: Immigration doesn’t impact unemployment,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 20, 2009.

<sup>211</sup> Lisa Rathke, “Dairy Farmer Says He Needs Immigrant Workers to Survive,” *The Times Argus*, March 8, 2010.

<sup>212</sup> Rathke, May 10, 2010.

<sup>213</sup> John Briggs, “Forum Focuses on migrant farmworkers,” *The Burlington Free Press*, April 25, 2010.

<sup>214</sup> Kevin O’Connor, “Of Milk and Mexicans – Vt. Farms Vexed by Migrant Dilemma.” *Times Argus*, Mar. 8, 2009.

## VIRGINIA

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Cromwell Produce was founded in the 1900s by John Giles Cromwell. The farm is still family-owned and operated, growing strawberries, peas, sugar snaps, and beets in Virginia Beach, Virginia.<sup>215</sup> Co-owner John Cromwell says that he began using the H-2A seasonal labor program eight years back to help plant and harvest vegetables on his 60 acres. He says, “*You can’t find local labor to do the field work.*”<sup>216</sup>

Mike Cullipher, another Virginia Beach farmer, co-owns Cullipher Farm Market, which is in its fifth generation of family ownership and operation. The farm grows fresh fruits and vegetables with very little use of pesticides, but Mr. Cullipher has had similar problems finding reliable workers to do the field work. In early 2009, he hired three local workers; one of the workers quit after three hours, another lasted until lunch, and the third worker quit at 3 p.m. the same day. Mr. Cullipher feels that the scarcity of local agriculture hands puts him in a tough position due to the size of his farm. He states, “*We’re big enough that we can’t do everything ourselves, but small enough that it’s hard to justify hiring workers through the H-2A program.*”<sup>217</sup>

## WASHINGTON

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Randy Broetje laments the 15 million pounds of apples that went unpicked due to the labor shortages in 2006. “*We didn’t have enough pickers, so they [the apples] are going to drop,*” he said. “*Our labor supply has been our number one concern... There’s just not enough people.*”<sup>218</sup> His farm, Broetje Orchards, covers more than 4,300 acres along the Snake River in Prescott, Washington. The trees on this family farm are cared for all year, and the fruit is grown, stored, and packed all in the same on-site facilities.<sup>219</sup> In 2006, however, Mr. Broetje was short 300 apple harvesters. The shortage forced him to abandon apple picking on 400 of his 5,400 acres of orchards.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> “About us,” Cromwell’s Produce, <http://cromwellsproduce.com/>.

<sup>216</sup> “Local labor often hard to find,” *Southeast Farm Press*, July 16, 2009.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Hal Bernton, “With shortage of workers, apple crop falls on rotten times,” *Seattle Times*, October 25, 2006.

<sup>219</sup> “Who We Are” and “Marketplace,” *Broetje Orchards*, <http://www.broetjeorchards.com>.

<sup>220</sup> Bernton, October 25, 2006.

Valicoff Fruit Company has been growing fresh produce in Washington's Yakima Valley since 1921. The family-owned farm has since expanded to be a wholesale producer of apples, cherries, peaches, pears, nectarines, and apricots. Owner Rob Valicoff recalls standing outside of his pickup truck trying to hire workers and finding no one to help harvest his 1,200 acres of apples and cherries. *"We need an H-2A vehicle that works,"* said Mr. Valicoff.<sup>221</sup>

In 2008, nearly 500 tons of apples in Washington State went unpicked due to picker shortages, according to the Washington Farm Bureau.<sup>222</sup>

In Mount Vernon, Washington, dairy farmer Roger Short reports, *"I know of farmers around Washington who are having tremendous problems finding help... I know of people who've lost their milking crews."* Mr. Short decided to give up dairying in 2003; he now uses the 350 acres on his former dairy farm to raise cattle. The lack of local labor was a significant factor in his decision to give up dairy farming. Mr. Short says, *"The native-born people didn't want to do what we were doing. They don't want to deal with the fact that a dairy is 24-seven-365."*<sup>223</sup>

Nash Huber, the owner of Nash's Organic Produce, has also made production changes due to the labor crisis. Mr. Nash grows carrots, leafy greens, potatoes, and other vegetables on 400 acres in Sequim, Washington; but he says, *"We gave up wholesale spinach... because that requires the skilled workers who aren't here."* Nash's Organic Produce cannot find enough local laborers to hoe the land, bunch spinach, and cut cabbage on the farm.<sup>224</sup>



*A worker loads a fresh harvest of cherries.*

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<sup>221</sup> Michelle Dupler, "Farmers back bill easing labor crunch," *Tri-City Herald (Washington)*, February 12, 2009.

<sup>222</sup> Dan Wheat, "Farm Bureau says some apples left on trees," *Wenatchee World*, November 22, 2008.

<sup>223</sup> Diane Urbani de la Paz, "Who will pick the crops? North Olympic Peninsula farmers lament lack of migrant workers," *Peninsula Daily News*, October 26, 2008.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

Dan Newhouse grows hops, tree fruit, grapes, and alfalfa on 600 acres in the Yakima Valley, Washington. Mr. Newhouse is now the Director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and he worries about the economic impact of labor shortages on Washington's 8.5 billion dollar agriculture industry. He states, *"To have the labor situation so tenuous, it feels like we're taking too big a risk with a large industry for Washington."*<sup>225</sup>

## WEST VIRGINIA

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Machines cannot be used to harvest fruit crops in West Virginia that are delicate and bruise easily, says Bill Aiken, a field representative with the West Virginia Farm Bureau. *"It can be difficult to get adequate help,"* he says. *"It's been difficult to get people to pick since the crackdown on immigration... Most all fruit is picked by hand because it can't be bruised."*<sup>226</sup>

West Virginia used to be one of the top ten fruit producing states in the country. However, Mr. Aiken reports that the number of West Virginia fruit orchards has declined. Land estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show that 600,000 acres of farmland in West Virginia have closed down since 2007.<sup>227</sup> Nearly one-quarter of West Virginia is farmland, and the state's agriculture industry is valued at 591.7 million dollars.<sup>228</sup>

## WISCONSIN

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Tim Servais is the owner of Servais-Hamburg Hills Farms, a mid-sized 240-cow dairy outside of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Mr. Servais has tried hiring local high school students, but he says they were unreliable, lacked the expertise, or did not want to work the unusual hours that are typical on a dairy farm.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Shannon Dininny, "Washington ag director talks about new role," *Associated Press State & Local Wire*, May 13, 2009.

<sup>226</sup> Paul Darst, "Slowing economy forcing farmers to make changes," *ABC WBOY-TV, West Virginia*, June 12, 2008.

<sup>227</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Farms, Land in Farms, and Livestock Operations 2008 Summary," *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, February 2009.

<sup>228</sup> National Agricultural Statistics Service, "West Virginia 2009 State Agriculture Overview," *U.S. Department of Agriculture*.

<sup>229</sup> Jacob Kushner, "Immigrants now 40 percent of state's dairy workers," *Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism*, November 4, 2009.

*“I’ve always tried to hire people who were local so I had some background on them. I just couldn’t find people to do the work,” says Mr. Servais. “It’s labor intense. When you’re (on) a dairy farm you’re on call 24-7, 365, no matter if you’re on vacation or you’re down at the local store or what.”*<sup>230</sup>

Roger Kukowski, a dairy farmer in Osceola, Wisconsin, has not been able to rely on local workers to milk his 350 cows. Mr. Kukowski needs his workers to milk cows from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. He says, *“I was always on pins and needles because people were constantly quitting or not showing up.”*<sup>231</sup>

A 2009 study by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, shows that 40 percent of the laborers on Wisconsin dairy farms are foreign-born.<sup>232</sup> Sandi Zirbel, who owns 635 cows on a dairy in Green Bay, Wisconsin, says that as many as 19 of 20 applicants for farm jobs are immigrants.<sup>233</sup> Loren Wolfe co-owns a 575-cow farm near Cochrane, Wisconsin, where the work is dirty and the hours are long. He says, *“We need them [immigrant workers] to milk cows or we’d barely be in business.”* His co-owner, John Rosenow, says their immigrant workers are “excellent” and “capable.”<sup>234</sup>

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, indicate that demographic changes in Wisconsin have contributed to the shortage of local dairy workers. *“Farm families (like U.S. families in general) are declining in size, spouses and farm children increasingly seek off-farm careers, and the average age of Wisconsin dairy farmers is increasing. These trends further lead to the need for hired employees. Farmers we interviewed reported difficulties finding U.S.-born workers willing to fill these new dairy farm jobs. Farmers said young people in rural Wisconsin have little desire to work on dairy farms, and that it is hard to find US-born people willing to work long hours, night shifts, and weekends.”*<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Georgia Pabst, “Immigrants an increasingly important labor force in Wisconsin dairy,” *The Journal Sentinel*, February 4, 2009.

<sup>232</sup> Jill Harrison, Sarah Lloyd, Trish O’Kane, “Changing Hands: Hired Labor on Wisconsin Dairy Farms,” *University of Wisconsin – Madison*, February 2009.

<sup>233</sup> Kushner, November 4, 2009.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Harrison, Lloyd, O’Kane, February 2009.

## WYOMING

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*Herders tend to a flock of sheep.*

Fred Roberts is a third-generation sheep rancher from Cokeville, Wyoming. The Roberts family has over 30 years of experience, and a herd of 8,000 sheep in Wyoming. They receive “very few responses” from locals for herding jobs. Mr. Roberts says, *“Herding may be hard work and sometimes lonely, but many other outdoor jobs in Wyoming are also. My business cannot survive without these [immigrant] herders. We cannot fill these jobs with domestic workers.”*<sup>236</sup>

*“Herders are on call 24 hours a day,”* explains Mr. Roberts. *“But, as in many jobs, some days are longer than others. During lambing season, both herders and sheep operators put in many hours as this is a critical time for most sheep operations.”*<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Fred Roberts, “Focus on ranchers who hire illegal aliens,” *The Star-Tribune*, January 24, 2010.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

