

Immigration and Agriculture

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<http://migration.ucdavis.edu>

3 Topics

- Immigrants in the US
- Immigration Reform
- AgJOBS

Daily Arrivals = 90,000

- 2,600 legal immigrants x 365 = 949,000
- 86,000 temporary visitors = 31 million
- 1,400 unauthorized = 511,000/year

Immigration 1

- 37 million foreign-born US residents
- Three almost equal groups:
- legal immigrants and temporary visitors
- naturalized US citizens
- unauthorized

Immigration 2

- 8 of 12 million unauthorized in labor force, in ag, construction, meatpacking, services
- Ag: less than 20% of unauthorized, but often port of entry
- Ag: special role in immigration from Braceros, SAW

Immigration Reform

- Early 1980s: Mexican crisis, UFW problems, 25% unauthorized in CA ag and concentrated in less perishable
- IRCA (1986): Grand Bargain
- Employer sanctions to reduce unauthorized
- Amnesty to wipe the slate clean

IRCA's Effects

- Unauthorized up: 3.5 million in 1986; 12 million in 2006
- Why: sanctions did not work; legalization worked too well, esp in ag
- IRCA helped to spread “Mexicans” throughout rural America

1990s: Unauthorized Up

- Ag: let's have H-2A E-Z to get legal farm workers
- Issues:
- Replace certification with attestation
- Housing allowance, not housing
- Reduce AEWR

AgJOBS 1: Legalization

- Purpose: Give ag a legal work force
- Legalization: Up to 1.5 million unauthorized get 6-year blue cards
- Must continue to do some farm work to earn immigrant status; can travel in and out of US; family members protected from removals

AgJOBS 2: Reform H-2A

- Attestation replaces certification
- AEWB frozen at 2002 levels and studied (from \$9.20 in CA in 2007 to \$8.02)
- Housing allowance of \$1 to \$2 an hour replaces the requirement to provide housing

Ag Labor Force Changes

- Difficult entry means longer stays, maybe quicker exits from ag
- More outsourcing of esp seasonal worker procurement to FLCs
- Higher hourly wages and earnings with more young men; few benefits

Farm Labor Outlook: no imm

- Wage costs up with minimum wage increase
- Health care: play or pay?
- New enforcement efforts: ICE and Swift; RICO

3 Predictions

- Farm workers of tomorrow grow up today outside US
- Middlemen play big role, esp in seasonal labor market
- Farm labor costs increase unevenly; need to plan for unanticipated changes

Further information

- <http://migration.ucdavis.edu>

Thank you