

Rising Agricultural Wages: Context for Congressional Interest in the H-2A Visa Program

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Rising Agricultural Wages: Context for Congressional Interest in the H-2A Visa Program

In recent years, wages for hired workers in agriculture have been rising faster than the general rate of wage increases in the United States. This could be a concern for Congress because rising agricultural wages increase costs for farmers and ranchers, affecting food prices, demand for imported food, demand for foreign workers in the U.S. agricultural sector, and demand for investments in the mechanization of farmwork.

Many features of the current agricultural labor market were established by previous legislation. Among these features is the H-2A nonimmigrant agricultural worker visa program, which allows U.S. agricultural employers legally to hire foreign workers for temporary or seasonal work. This program has existed largely in its current form since legislation was enacted in 1986. There is currently no cap on the number of foreign agricultural workers who can be hired through the H-2A visa program, and an increasing portion of the agricultural workforce is now made up of H-2A workers.

There are multiple proposals in the 119th Congress intended to slow the growth in agricultural wages. These proposals generally focus on changing the wage requirements of the H-2A program. However, new legislation will only be effective in reducing agricultural wage growth if it addresses the actual causes of this growth, and the underlying causes of agricultural wage growth are broader than the wage requirements of the H-2A program.

There are three broad theories regarding why agricultural wages are increasing. This report examines these theories and the evidence supporting each one. The theories are not mutually exclusive; there is some explanatory power in all of them, and a full understanding of how policy changes are likely to affect agricultural labor requires understanding all three theories.

The first of the theories is that wages are rising because the supply of farmworkers—in particular, the supply of working-age Mexican-born farmworkers in the United States, with and without work authorization—is declining. There is a great deal of evidence to support this theory. Some of this evidence involves root causes within Mexico that affect the number of Mexican-born people interested in farm work (such as falling birth rates, rising education levels, and greater work opportunities in Mexico); other evidence involves U.S. immigration and border enforcement policies that affect the number of Mexican-born farmworkers in the United States.

A second theory is that agricultural wages are rising because wages for similar workers in the United States are also rising. In the U.S. economy as a whole, wages for low-paying jobs have been rising more quickly than wages for average- or higher-paying jobs for the past decade. Agricultural work has traditionally been a relatively low-paying job. Researchers studying this pattern of wage changes have attributed the increases in wages for low-wage jobs to state and local minimum wage increases as well as to increased job mobility for low-wage workers during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic shocks.

A third theory is that agricultural wages are rising because of the wage requirements of the H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program. The H-2A visa program requires that prospective H-2A employers advertise and engage in positive recruitment of U.S. workers for the H-2A job opportunity and offer U.S. workers terms and working conditions no less favorable than those offered to H-2A workers. It also requires these employers to offer wages at or above wage levels specified in regulations that are intended to prevent adverse effects on the wages of similarly employed U.S. workers, and to provide housing and other benefits to workers in these positions. The number of H-2A visas issued has grown in recent years. Some farmer advocates attribute increases in farm labor costs to the wage requirements of the H-2A visa program. There is evidence that wage increases in the H-2A visa program partially spill over into wage increases for U.S. agricultural workers. However, the impact of the H-2A visa program on overall labor costs in the agricultural sector should be understood in the broader context of other factors that also affect agricultural wages and lead farmers to increasingly rely on the H-2A program for farm labor.

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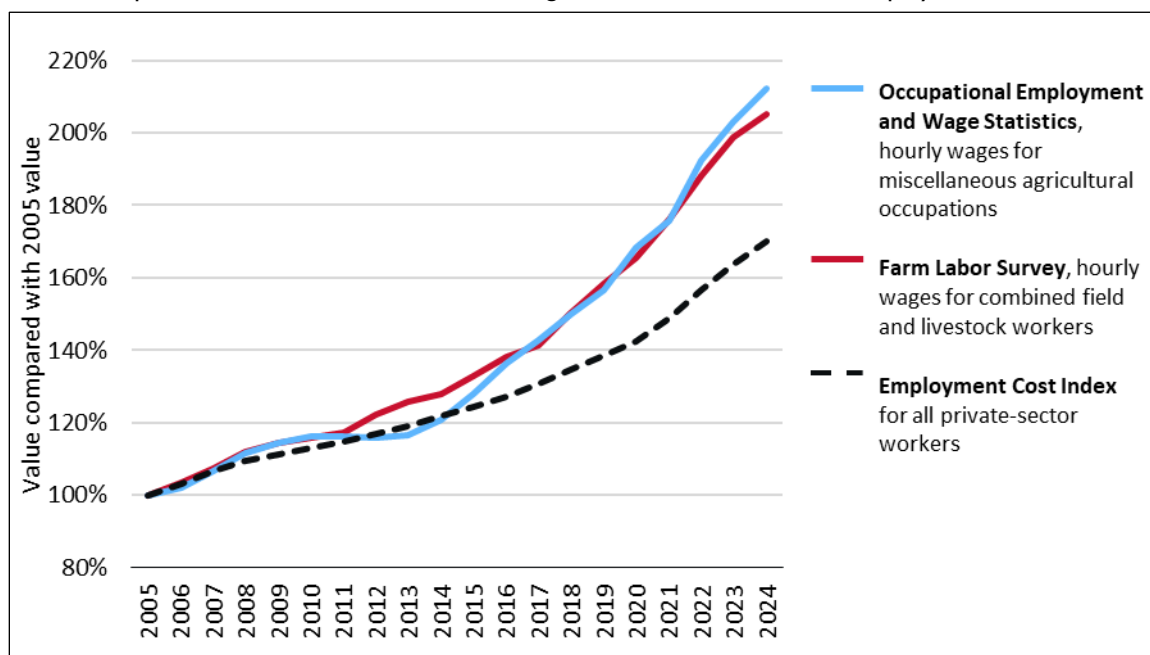
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Introduction

Of the approximately 161 million people employed in the United States in 2024, about 2.3 million worked in agricultural industries.¹ Wages for hired workers in these industries are increasing faster than overall private-sector wages and salaries in the United States. **Figure 1** shows nominal wage increases over time for hired agricultural workers, as measured in two separate federal surveys,² relative to average nominal wage increases for private sector workers in the United States. The Employment Cost Index³ of wages and salaries for all private sector workers in 2024 was 170% of its 2005 level, while national-level hourly wages for combined field and livestock workers in the Farm Labor Survey were 205% of their 2005 level and national-level hourly wages for miscellaneous agricultural occupations in the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics were 212% of their 2005 level.

Figure 1. Growth in Agricultural Wages Since 2005

Compared with Overall Private-Sector Wage Growth Measured in the Employer Cost Index



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) and Employer Cost Index (ECI) data; National Agricultural Statistics Service, Farm Labor Survey (FLS) data.

Notes: OEWS data are for the broad occupation group “Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers (45-2090).” ECI data are for the third quarter of each year, in Series CIU2020000000000A. FLS data are for combined field and livestock workers in 49 states.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, Household Data, Annual Averages, Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, 1954 to date, January 29, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat01.htm>. For other estimates of the size of the agricultural labor force from federal sources, see CRS In Focus IF12961, *How Many People Work in Agriculture in the United States?*.

² These survey programs are described more fully in CRS Report R47944, *Measuring Wages in the Agricultural Sector for the H-2A Visa Program*.

³ The Employment Cost Index measures the change in labor costs to employers over time, using a fixed composition of labor. For more information about the Employment Cost Index, see <https://www.bls.gov/eci/>. Only the wage and salary component of this cost is shown in **Figure 1**.

On average, labor costs are about 13% of total farm expenses, but in specialty crops—the most labor-intensive agricultural industries—labor costs make up more than a third of total expenses.⁴ Particularly for farms growing labor-intensive crops using hired labor, rising wages increase overall farm expenses.⁵ Such increases in U.S. farm expenses risk increasing the price of food grown in the United States, making consumers more interested in buying food imported from lower-wage countries and farmers more interested in mechanizing additional farm tasks.⁶

Historically, policy changes in agricultural labor have not always had the expected impacts. For example, in 1964 the Johnson Administration ended the Bracero Program, which provided a legal means for Mexican agricultural workers to work on seasonal contracts in the United States from 1942 to 1964. This program was ended with the expectation of boosting employment and raising wages for U.S. farmworkers. However, the end of the Bracero program had little impact on U.S. farmworkers. Instead, farm owners who had previously employed Mexican laborers through the Bracero program responded to its ending by mechanizing aspects of farm production or switching agricultural production to crops that could be mechanized.⁷

There are multiple proposals in the 119th Congress intended to slow the growth in agricultural wages. These proposals largely focus on the H-2A nonimmigrant agricultural worker visa program, which currently allows U.S. agricultural employers to legally hire foreign workers for temporary or seasonal work. This program requires prospective H-2A employers to offer wages at or above wage levels specified in regulations, which is intended to prevent adverse effects on the wages of similarly employed U.S. workers, and to provide housing and other benefits to workers in these positions. For example, the Supporting Farm Operations Act of 2025 (H.R. 1624) would revert wage requirements for the H-2A visa program to those in effect on December 31, 2023. The Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3227) would cap the rate of growth for these wage requirements and would also make additional changes to the H-2A visa program, create a “certified agricultural worker” program for foreign agricultural workers to reside in the United States for longer periods, and increase federal funding for farmworker housing.

Another area of current federal policy relevant to the farm workforce is immigration enforcement. CRS has estimated that about 35% of the U.S. agricultural workforce, or 680,000 people in 2024, had no work authorization; another estimate is that 850,000 U.S. farmworkers have no legal status.⁸ Removing these individuals from the U.S. agricultural workforce would reduce its size and might increase wages for the remaining workers.⁹

⁴ Dipak Subedi and Anil K. Giri, *Charts of Note: Specialty crop farms have highest labor cost as portion of total cash expenses*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Economic Research Service, October 15, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=110172>. “Specialty Crops” are defined by 7 U.S.C. §1621 as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture).”

⁵ More information on farm expenses is available in CRS Report R48278, *2023 and 2024 Farm Sector Profitability: Issues for Congress*.

⁶ Diane E. Charlton, *Immigration Enforcement and the US Agricultural Sector in 2025*, American Enterprise Institute, April 15, 2025, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/immigration-enforcement-and-the-us-agricultural-sector-in-2025/>.

⁷ Michael A. Clemens et al., “Immigration Restrictions as Active Labor Market Policy: Evidence from the Mexican Bracero Exclusion,” *American Economic Review*, vol. 108, no. 6 (June 2018), pp. 1468-1487, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20170765>.

⁸ See CRS In Focus IF12979, *Work Authorization Among Hired Agricultural Workers*; and Philip Martin and Zach Rutledge, “President Trump and Farm Labor: The Outlook.” ARE Update 28(3): 5–8. University of California Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics, 2025, <https://giannini.ucop.edu/filer/file/1740695136/21236/>.

⁹ As examples, see Patrick Thomas, “Farms, Meat Plants Brace for Trump Immigration Crackdown,” *Wall Street* (continued...)

The impact of deporting foreign agricultural workers without work authorization on agricultural wages will also depend on how agricultural labor markets function. This report describes theories of why agricultural wages are currently rising, and presents evidence supporting each theory. These theories should not be viewed as mutually exclusive explanations, but rather as explanations of possible factors that may together indicate why agricultural wages are rising.

Congressional Interest in Agricultural Wages

The Senate Committee on the Judiciary held hearings in the 117th and 118th Congresses on the role of foreign-born farmworkers in the U.S. agricultural labor markets. At these hearings, Senators asked hearing witnesses about agricultural wage increases.¹⁰

In the 118th Congress, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn “GT” Thompson and Ranking Member David Scott created a bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group “to focus on the workforce issues faced by the nation’s agricultural producers.” This working group focused on potential reforms to the H-2A visa program for nonimmigrant agricultural workers, including changes to reduce the rate of increase in required wages for this program.¹¹

In the 119th Congress, 116 Members signed a letter in May 2025 requesting that FY2026 appropriations legislation include a provision affecting the required wages for agricultural workers hired via the H-2A visa program. The letter requests that a component of these wage requirements be fixed at January 2023 levels.¹²

Witnesses called before congressional hearings on agriculture have repeatedly emphasized the current importance of agricultural wages. For example, Zippy Duvall, President of the American Farm Bureau Federation, testified to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry that “the greatest domestic policy threat to American agriculture is the persistent inaction to find a solution to our workforce needs. In short, the costs are too high, the domestic willingness to work is too low, and family farms are closing down.”¹³ Ryan Talley, on behalf of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, said before the House Committee on Agriculture that “I cannot testify before Congress without first emphasizing how vital it is to the security of our nation’s food supply, and the future of specialty crop production in the United States, for Congress to enact a

Journal, November 21, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/business/an-immigration-crackdown-risks-sapping-farms-vital-source-of-labor-88a91df0> and Natalie Allison et al., “Despite Trump’s claim, no policy change underway for migrant farmworkers,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/13/trump-immigrant-farm-workers-hospitality/>.

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate Judiciary Committee, *Immigrant Farmworkers are Essential to Feeding America*, 117th Cong., 1st sess., July 21, 2021, and U.S. Congress, Senate Judiciary Committee, *From Farm to Table: Immigrant Workers Get the Job Done*, 118th Cong., 1st sess., May 31, 2023, S. Hrg. 118-39 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2024), pp. 14, 20, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-118shrg52708/pdf/CHRG-118shrg52708.pdf>.

¹¹ U.S. Congress, House Agriculture Committee, Agricultural Labor Working Group, *Interim Report*, committee print, 118th Cong., 1st sess., November 7, 2023, https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_agriculture_-_alwg_interim_report_-_final_-_11.7.23.pdf, p. 3.

¹² Letter from Bill Huizenga, Member of Congress, Hillary J. Scholten, Member of Congress, and 114 additional Members of Congress, to The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair, and The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education, May 22, 2025, https://huizenga.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_h2a_wage_freeze_fy26.pdf.

¹³ U.S. Congress, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, *Perspectives from the Field: Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agricultural Economy, Part I*, hearing, 119th Cong., 1st sess., February 5, 2025, https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fcb1b58c-b33a-2f8d-02f7-b57684eef971/Testimony_Duvall_02.05.2025.pdf.

bipartisan solution to the workforce crisis in agriculture ... this continually escalating expense is untenable.”¹⁴

Recent History of Federal Involvement in Agricultural Labor Markets

Most farms are small and do not use hired labor, relying on the farmers’ own labor to produce agricultural products.¹⁵ However, most farm labor is worked on larger farms that use hired and/or contract labor. Hired workers—rather than farmers and ranchers and their families—have provided most of the agricultural labor in the United States for well over a century, and for many decades the majority of these workers have come from Mexico.¹⁶

Many features of the current agricultural labor market were established by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA; P.L. 99-603). The IRCA made it unlawful for employers knowingly to hire someone without work authorization. The IRCA provided permanent residency to foreign-born people who could document at least 90 days of farmwork in the United States during 1985-1986 (some of whom then left agriculture for work in other industries).¹⁷ The IRCA also separated the previously existing H-2 employer-sponsored temporary work visa program into two programs: the H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program and the H-2B temporary nonagricultural worker visa program.¹⁸

Under the H-2A program, employers must advertise positions to U.S. workers—offering the same wages and benefits to U.S. workers who might be interested in the position that they are required to offer foreign workers—before they can receive labor certification for hiring H-2A workers. One of the most expensive benefits employers are required to provide to participate in the H-2A program is farmworker housing that meets specified health and safety standards. The requirement that the employers must offer interested U.S. workers the same wages and benefits (including housing) offered to H-2A workers did not exist under the earlier H-2 and Bracero programs.¹⁹

Current law—established in the IRCA in 1986 and codified in 8 U.S.C. §1188(a)(1)—requires employers to obtain labor certification from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) before submitting a petition for H-2A workers to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (HHS). DOL can only approve an employer’s labor certification application for the H-2A program after determining that the employment of the H-2A workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of workers similarly employed in the United States. To guard against adverse effects on similarly employed U.S. workers, DOL requires employers to offer wages for H-2A

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, House Agriculture Committee, *Examining the Economic Crisis in Farm Country*, 119th Cong., 1st sess., February 11, 2025, https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony-package_talley_02.11.2025.pdf.

¹⁵ According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, 437,301 farms used hired labor and 193,614 used contract labor in 2022 out of approximately 1.9 million farms (approximately 23% and 10%, respectively).

¹⁶ J. Edward Taylor and Diane Charlton, *The Farm Labor Problem: A Global Perspective*, 2019, p. 125.

¹⁷ Philip L. Martin, “Good Intentions Gone Awry: IRCA and U.S. Agriculture,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 534 (July 1994), pp. 49-51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1048497>. Martin argues in the article that very little documentation was required under this program, and many of the undocumented people who applied and gained legal status under this provision were not actually farmworkers.

¹⁸ Philip Martin, “The Role of the H-2A Program in California Agriculture,” *Choices*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1st Quarter 2019), pp. 1-8, https://www.choicesmagazine.org/UserFiles/file/cmsarticle_678.pdf.

¹⁹ Marcelo Castillo et al., “Whither the H-2A Visa Program: Expansion and Concentration,” *Choices*, no. 2 (2nd Quarter 2024), <https://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/submitted-articles/whither-the-h-2a-visa-program-expansion-and-concentration>.

positions at or above the highest of five wage levels: (1) the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), (2) the applicable prevailing wage rate, (3) an agreed-upon collective bargaining wage rate, (4) the federal minimum wage rate, or (5) the applicable state minimum wage rate. The AEWR is usually the highest of these rates, and so concerns over the wage requirements of the H-2A visa program focus on the AEWR.

DOL regulations provide the methodologies for determining AEWRs and prevailing wage rates. Under current regulations, for workers in the *Big Six* occupations that comprise most H-2A workers,²⁰ the AEWR is a state or regional hourly rate for field and livestock workers as estimated from gross wages measured in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Farm Labor Survey (FLS) during the previous calendar year.²¹

There is no cap on the number of foreign agricultural workers who can be hired through the H-2A visa program, although these workers can only be hired for temporary or seasonal work (year-round agricultural industries cannot currently use the H-2A program for this reason). Until 2007, there were less than 50,000 H-2A visas issued annually, but their number grew rapidly from 2011 to 2022, as shown in **Figure 2**. Because there was little growth in the overall number of people employed in U.S. agriculture during this time period,²² an increasing portion of the agricultural workforce is now made up of H-2A workers, who were approximately one in six agricultural workers in 2024.²³

Figure 2 also shows the number of H-2A positions certified, which is higher than the number of visas granted for two reasons. First, farm employers may hire H-2A workers already in the United States (perhaps picking a crop with a different growing season) who will not need to obtain an additional visa. Second, farm employers may request labor certification (weeks before they know exactly how many workers they will need) for a larger number of H-2A workers than they eventually hire.

²⁰ The Big Six occupations are Graders and Sorters of Agricultural Products; Agricultural Equipment Operators; Farmworkers and Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse Laborers; Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animal Farmworkers; Hand Packers and Packagers; and All Other Agricultural Workers.

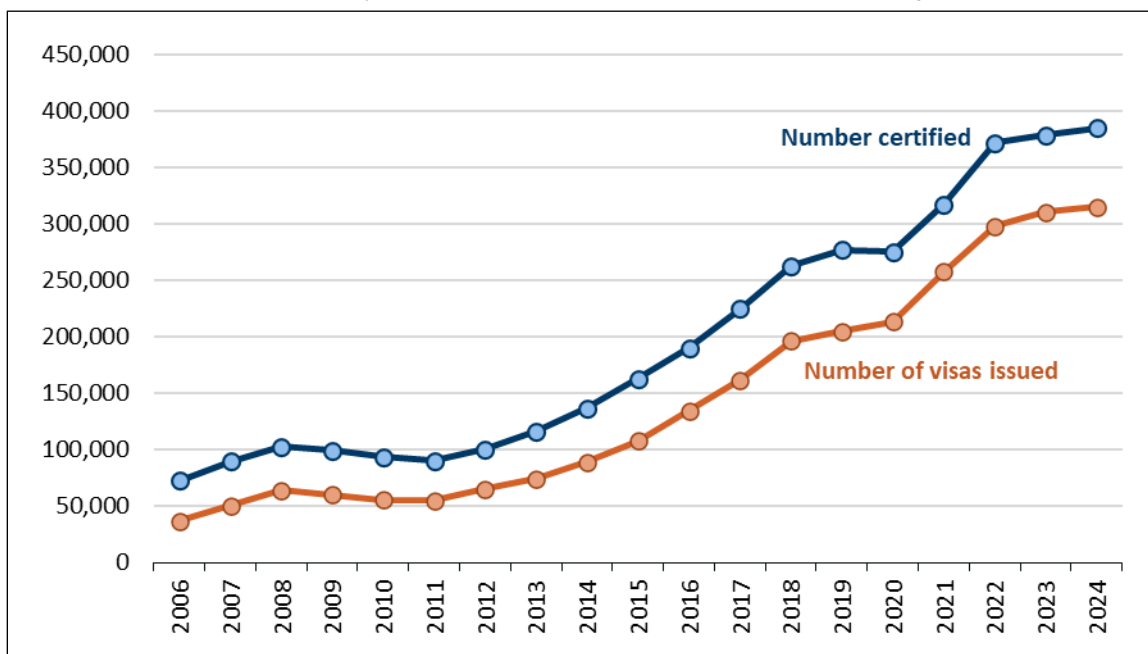
²¹ For a summary of how AEWRs are estimated for other agricultural occupations, see CRS In Focus IF12408, *Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) Methodology for Temporary Employment of H-2A Nonimmigrants in the United States*.

²² Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, Household Data, Annual Averages, Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, 1954 to date, January 29, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat01.htm>.

²³ This estimate comes from CRS In Focus IF12979, *Work Authorization Among Hired Agricultural Workers*.

Figure 2. Growth of the H-2A Program

Number of H-2A Jobs Certified and Number of H-2A Visas Issued, by Year



Source: CRS tabulations of labor certification application data from DOL and published tabulations from the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

For individual farmers, use of the H-2A program has been facilitated by larger organizations. For example, the North Carolina Grower’s Association developed early expertise in navigating the H-2A program requirements on behalf of individual farmers in that state, and became one of the first large users of the H-2A program.²⁴ Other growers’ associations that have become large users of the H-2A program, facilitating the growth of the H-2A visa program in other areas of the United States, include the Florida East Coast Travel Services (a subsidiary of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association)²⁵ and the Western Growers Association of Arizona, California, Colorado and New Mexico farmers.²⁶

In recent years, there has been particularly strong growth in H-2A demand in labor-intensive industries—vegetable, melon, fruit, and tree-nut producers—from both individual farmers and farm labor contractors. These industries produce crops that are difficult for machines to plant or harvest. There has also been growing use of the H-2A program by farm labor contractors. Some of this growth is due to these contractors’ economies of scale in hiring workers (and providing their travel to the United States and their housing) for longer periods of time than each individual grower needs.²⁷

²⁴ Jeff Luckstead and Stephen Devadoss, “The Importance of H-2A Guest Workers in Agriculture,” *Choices*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1st Quarter 2019), pp. 1-8, https://www.choicesmagazine.org/UserFiles/file/cmsarticle_679.pdf.

²⁵ Florida East Coast Travel Services Inc. (FLECTS): About Us, <https://flects.com/about-us/>.

²⁶ Western Growers Association, Legal & H-2A Services, <https://www.wga.com/membership-services/legal-h2a-services/>.

²⁷ Marcelo Castillo et al., *Examining the Growth in Seasonal Agricultural H-2A Labor*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-226), August 2021, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=102014>.

Use of the H-2A program is concentrated among large employers. Thousands of employers (which can be individual farmers or ranchers, growers' associations, or farm labor contractors) had labor certification applications approved to hire H-2A workers in 2020, but 90 H-2A employers were certified to employ 40% of the H-2A workers.²⁸ Some of the H-2A employers are multinational companies, which operate in both the United States and Mexico. These companies can select their most productive Mexican workers to employ in the United States at higher wages than they pay in Mexico.²⁹

Because the H-2A program is only for work of a “temporary or seasonal nature,” the dairy industry—with relatively constant needs for workers throughout the year—has not been able to hire workers through this program.³⁰

Rising Agricultural Wages: Theories and Evidence

Theories about why agricultural wages are rising generally fall into three groups, which are not mutually exclusive. This section describes these theories—and evidence supporting each one.

Table 1. Explanations of Rising Agricultural Wages

Theory	Main Mechanism(s)	Summary of Evidence
Mexican agricultural labor abundance is ending	Fewer Mexican-born agricultural workers than in previous decades are already living in the United States and working in agriculture.	A large body of academic study concludes this is the underlying force driving greater demand for H-2A visas and rising wages in the United States.
Rising wages and housing costs more generally	Alternative options are improving for potential agricultural workers in the United States and there is scarce affordable housing near agricultural jobs.	Academic studies and anecdotal evidence from H-2A employers suggest this contributes to rising costs for agricultural employers.
The role of the H-2A program in setting wages for domestic labor	Wage and housing requirements for the H-2A program make it expensive for agricultural employers, but they use the program when they cannot find U.S. workers at lower cost.	H-2A wage requirements are intended to avoid undercutting wages for U.S. agricultural workers. However, agricultural employer advocates are concerned about large and repeated increases in these requirements. Some academic evidence suggests increases in H-2A wage requirements partially spill over into wage increases for U.S.-based agricultural workers.

Source: Compiled by CRS.

²⁸ Marcelo Castillo et al., *The H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program in 2020*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-238), August 2022, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=104605>.

²⁹ Philip Martin, “The Role of the H-2A Program in California Agriculture,” *Choices*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1st Quarter 2019), pp. 1-8, https://www.choicesmagazine.org/UserFiles/file/cmsarticle_678.pdf.

³⁰ “Dairy Report: Dairy Farms Want Access to H-2A Program,” *Dairy Herd Management*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.dairyherd.com/news/labor/dairy-report-dairy-farms-want-access-h-2a-program>.

The End of Mexican Agricultural Labor Abundance

For many decades, the majority of hired farm workers in the United States—both those residing in the country and those hired on H-2A visas—were born in Mexico.³¹ In recent years, the number of Mexican-born agricultural workers residing in the United States has been decreasing, and the average age of these workers has been rising. This declining availability of Mexican-born farmworkers has been attributed both to changes happening within Mexico and to U.S. immigration policy. A declining supply of Mexican-born agricultural workers puts upward pressure on agricultural wages in both the United States and Mexico.

The Mexican labor market has experienced major changes in recent decades. Education levels in Mexico have been steadily increasing, the number of children born per woman has been falling, and the portion of the population living in urban areas has increased. The share of the Mexican population working in agriculture has fallen: studies show large declines in rural Mexican agricultural labor supply from 1980 to 2010—in both Mexico and the United States.³² Farms in southern Mexico are bringing in laborers from Guatemala.³³

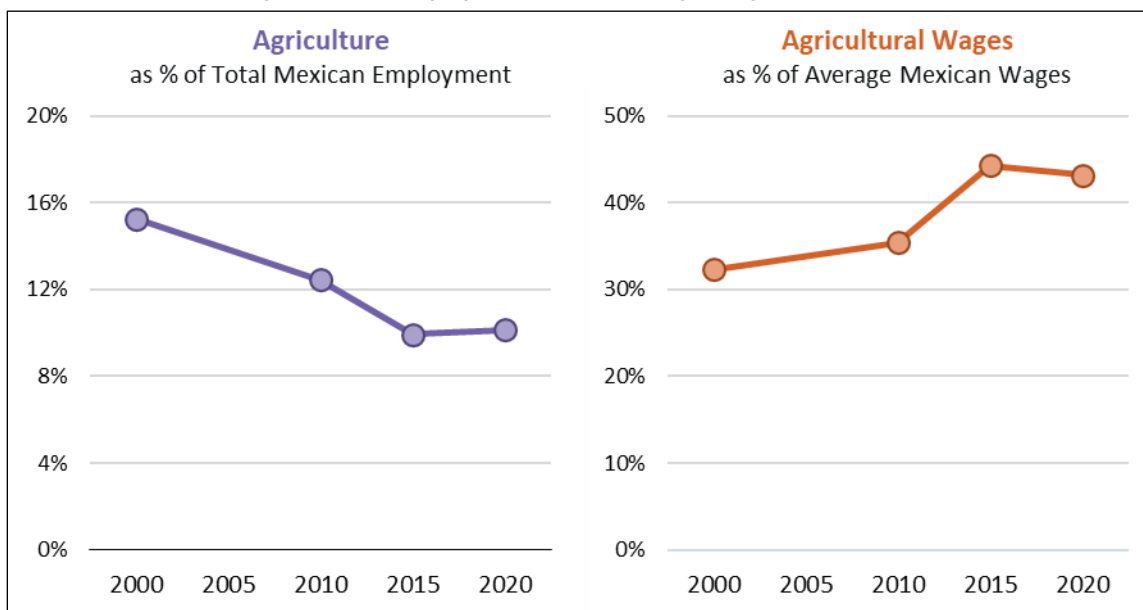
³¹ Data available from the National Agricultural Workers Survey show that about 62% of U.S. resident crop workers were born in Mexico in 2019-2022, the most recent period available; see <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/national-agricultural-workers-survey/news-data-finder>. Visa data from the U.S. State Department show that in FY2023, 92% of H-2A visas went to Mexicans; see <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/Non-Immigrant-Statistics/NIVDetailTables/FY23NIVDetailTable.pdf>.

³² J. Edward Taylor et al., “The End of Farm Labor Abundance,” *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, vol. 34, no. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 587-598, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23356432>; Diane Charlton and J. Edward Taylor, “A Declining Farm Workforce: Analysis of Panel Data from Rural Mexico,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. 98, no. 4 (July 2016), pp. 1158-1180, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24739937>; and Steven Zahniser et al., *Farm Labor Markets in the United States and Mexico Pose Challenges for U.S. Agriculture*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-201), November 2018, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=90831>.

³³ Steven Zahniser et al., *Farm Labor Markets in the United States and Mexico Pose Challenges for U.S. Agriculture*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-201), November 2018, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=90831>.

Figure 3. Employment and Wages in the Mexican Agricultural Sector

As Percentages of Total Employment and of Average Wages in Mexico, 2000–2020



Source: CRS analysis of Mexican Census Data.

Some evidence suggests that this tightening agricultural labor market within Mexico has meant rising incomes and wages in Mexico for these workers. Data from the Mexican INEGI National Survey on Occupations and Employment show increases in average monthly incomes for workers in the Mexican agricultural sector from 2014 to 2023.³⁴ Data from the Mexican Census (**Figure 3**) show that the percentage of Mexican employment in the Mexican agricultural sector fell from 2000 to 2020, while average wages in the sector generally increased as a percentage of average wages in Mexico.

Studies have shown a link between the availability of Mexican-born laborers and demand for H-2A visas within the United States. One study shows a link between the decline of Mexican-born domestic crop workers residing in the United States and the rise of H-2A visa requests;³⁵ another shows that fewer Mexican migrants to specific areas of the United States (due to factors in Mexico) are associated with more H-2A requests in that area.³⁶

U.S. policy can also affect the availability of Mexican-born agricultural workers, particularly workers without work authorization. The §287(g) federal program³⁷ increased state and local law enforcement agency participation in detaining unauthorized migrants. This program was

³⁴ Eduardo Sojo Aldape and Jorge Juvenal Campos Ferreira, *Mexico's Farm Labor Market*, May 2023, The Wilson Center and the Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS), November 14, 2024, p. 18, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Report%20eng%202023-1.pdf>.

³⁵ Dahye Kim, et al. "Domestic Farm Employment and the H-2A Visa Program," *paper prepared for presentation at the 2023 Agricultural & Applied Economics*, 2023, <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/335578/files/26494.pdf>.

³⁶ Julian Arteaga and Ashish Shenoy, "Mexican migration flows and agricultural labor markets in the U.S.," *Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) 2022 Annual Meeting*, August 2022, <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/322311>.

³⁷ For more information on this program, see CRS In Focus IF11898, *The 287(g) Program: State and Local Immigration Enforcement*.

implemented via agreements between the federal government and state and local law enforcement agencies, with the number of these agreements increasing from 2002 until 2011. Studies show that as the §287(g) program was implemented in local communities, U.S. farms paid more per hired worker, reduced local agricultural employment, increased mechanization, and reduced the amount of land planted with vegetables (a labor-intensive group of crops).³⁸

The extent to which the declining availability of Mexican-born farmworkers already in the United States affects U.S. farms depends on the willingness of other U.S. workers to work in agricultural jobs. One study has examined this issue, using data from the U.S. worker recruitment efforts of the North Carolina Growers' Association.³⁹ Under the H-2A program, employers must advertise their potential H-2A positions to U.S. workers—offering the same wages and benefits to those who might be interested in the position that they are required to offer foreign workers—before these employers can receive labor certification for hiring H-2A workers. In North Carolina, these recruitment efforts must include notifying the North Carolina Division of Employment Security about the potential H-2A positions. This agency lists the H-2A positions in databases available in its local offices throughout the state and its unemployment benefit counselors may recommend the positions to unemployed workers. The study examined the response of U.S. workers to these recruitment efforts for several thousand potential H-2A jobs from 1998 to 2012. It found few U.S. workers applied to potential H-2A agricultural jobs, even workers living in areas that were located near the potential H-2A positions and had a substantial number of unemployed U.S. workers. During the recession of 2007-2009, the number of unemployed people in North Carolina increased by about 290,000, but the number who accepted potential H-2A positions and started working in these positions increased by only 50.⁴⁰

Rising Wages and Housing Costs More Generally

A second explanation for rising agricultural wages focuses on rising wages and on housing costs more generally.

In the U.S. economy as a whole, wages for relatively low-paying jobs have been rising more quickly than wages for average or higher-paying jobs for the past decade.⁴¹ Wage increases for low-paying jobs may affect agriculture because agricultural field and ranch work is generally low-paying work.⁴² One widely cited study of these rising wages for low-wage workers shows that until the COVID-19 pandemic, rising wages for these positions were attributable largely to increases in state-level minimum wages. The disruptions of the pandemic separated many young

³⁸ Jennifer Ifft and Margaret Jodlowski, "Is ICE freezing US agriculture? Farm-level adjustment to increased local immigration enforcement," *Labour Economics*, vol. 78 (October 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2022.102203> and Genti Kostandini et al., "The Impact of Immigration Enforcement on the U.S. Farming Sector," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. 96, no. 1 (January 2014), pp. 172-192, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24477062>.

³⁹ Michael A. Clemens, "The effect of seasonal work visas on native employment: Evidence from US farm work in the Great Recession," *Review of International Economics*, vol. 30, no. 5 (November 2022), pp. 1348-1374, <https://doi.org/10.1111/roie.12603>.

⁴⁰ This study relies on data more than a decade old; there are no similar studies based on more recent data.

⁴¹ For more information on these patterns, see Matthew Dey et al., *Were wages converging during the 2010s expansion?*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, June 2022, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2022.19>; Clem Aeppli and Nathan Wilmers, "Rapid wage growth at the bottom has offset rising US inequality," *PNAS*, vol. 119, no. 42 (October 3, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2204305119>, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w31010/w31010.pdf, and CRS Report R48468, *Recent Wages Trends and Issues*.

⁴² See Daniel Costa, *The farmworker wage gap*, Economic Policy Institute, October 5, 2023, <https://www.epi.org/blog/the-farmworker-wage-gap-farmworkers-earned-40-less-than-comparable-nonagricultural-workers-in-2022/>

low-wage workers from their previous employers, and they found new jobs after the pandemic with higher-paying employers, resulting in higher wages for this group of workers as a whole.⁴³

A study of how state-level minimum wages affected agricultural employers from 1992 to 2012 finds that over 10-to-20-year periods, increases in minimum wages had no effect on overall agricultural expenditures for hired workers. It finds that minimum wage increases were associated with employment reductions for seasonal farm workers over the long run, such that overall expenditures were unchanged. The study also finds some evidence that farms made investments in labor-saving farm machinery, which may have allowed them to produce crops with reduced farm labor.⁴⁴

Agricultural work—which is physically laborious and takes place outdoors—requires some of the same worker strength and involves some of the same working conditions as residential construction work. A study shows that the geographic areas with greater housing demand during 2011 through 2017 had more growth in H-2A visas during these years, as potential U.S. farmworkers shifted from agriculture to construction in these areas.⁴⁵

Housing costs for agricultural workers also affect agricultural labor costs. The H-2A program requires agricultural employers to provide housing for the H-2A workers they employ (or for U.S. workers who accept the same positions), and housing is the major nonwage cost involved in the program.⁴⁶ Farm employers who built housing in order to use the H-2A program in the future have found that the availability of safe housing at low cost was helpful in recruiting U.S. farm workers.⁴⁷

The Role of the H-2A Program in Setting Wages for Domestic Labor

A third explanation for rising agricultural wages focuses on the laws and regulations of the H-2A visa program, particularly the AEWR.

As the H-2A program has grown to represent approximately one in six agricultural workers,⁴⁸ required wages and benefits for H-2A workers have become an increasingly important part of overall farm labor costs. Although one study found many H-2A workers in Florida during the

⁴³ David Autor et al., “The Unexpected Compression: Competition at Work in The Low Wage Labor Market,” NBER Working Paper, no. 31010 (May 2024), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w31010/w31010.pdf; and Daniel R. Carroll and Christopher J. Walker, “Compression in the Wage Distribution During the Post-Covid-19 Labor Market,” Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Economic Commentary 2025-06, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ec-202506>.

⁴⁴ Amy M. G. Kandilov and Ivan T. Kandilov, “The minimum wage and seasonal employment: Evidence from the US agricultural sector,” *Journal of Regional Science*, November 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jors.12474>.

⁴⁵ Marcelo Castillo and Diane Charlton, “Housing booms and H-2A agricultural guest worker employment,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, May 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12320>.

⁴⁶ Marcelo Castillo et al., “Whither the H-2A Visa Program: Expansion and Concentration,” *Choices* (Quarter 2 2024), <https://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/submitted-articles/whither-the-h-2a-visa-program-expansion-and-concentration>.

⁴⁷ Participant discussion at the October 2024 Symposium on U.S. Farm Labor Conditions, <https://www.farmfoundation.org/2024/10/04/symposium-on-u-s-farm-labor-conditions-discussed-sectors-diverse-challenges-and-opportunities/>.

⁴⁸ This estimate comes from CRS In Focus IF12979, *Work Authorization Among Hired Agricultural Workers*.

2016–2017 harvest year were paid more than the AEWR,⁴⁹ another study shows the AEWR was exactly the offered wage rate for more than 95% of H-2A workers during 2011–2019.⁵⁰

The costs to employers of employing only domestic workers are different from the costs of using the H-2A program. Farm employers must pay employer contributions to Social Security and Medicare as well as (in many states) UI taxes when they employ domestic workers but not when they employ foreign workers. However, participating in the H-2A program requires that employers pay wages at least as high as the AEWR and provide housing, transportation, and meal allowances to any worker in positions offered to foreign agricultural workers.⁵¹ Farmer advocates have expressed concerns that wage requirements of the H-2A visa increase wages for domestic agricultural workers because farm employers cannot bring in H-2A workers at wages lower than the AEWR. Some advocates have called the AEWR “essentially a minimum wage for the entire agriculture industry,”⁵² and others say the AEWR “contributes to a self-compounding wage inflation cycle.”⁵³

In the 118th Congress, the House Agricultural Labor Working Group focused on the H-2A visa program, asking producers and workers about their experiences with it. The group’s final report made 15 policy recommendations adopted with unanimous support from its members and another 6 policy recommendations adopted with majority support.⁵⁴ Every one of these recommendations for changes in agricultural labor policy involved the H-2A program, with many focused specifically on the AEWR.

Concerns over the Accuracy of the AEWR

For most H-2A positions,⁵⁵ the AEWR is calculated as the average gross wage for all field and livestock workers in the state or region during the previous year, as estimated from the USDA’s FLS during the previous year. There is a great deal of controversy over the AEWR.

Farm employer advocates see the AEWR as the minimum wage that domestic agricultural workers would accept, knowing that farm employers would need to pay this wage as well as

⁴⁹ Skyler Mark Simnitt and Gulcan Onel, “Earnings differentials between H-2A and unauthorized citrus harvesters in Florida,” *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2023), pp. 547–562, <https://doi.org/10.1017/age.2023.14>.

⁵⁰ Marcelo Castillo et al., *Examining the Growth in Seasonal Agricultural H-2A Labor*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-226), August 2021, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=102014>.

⁵¹ USDA, *H-2A Visa Program: Costs of the Program*, <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/h2a-visa-program#costs>. These amounts include housing costs of approximately \$9,000 to \$13,000 per worker and transportation costs of \$400 to \$650 per worker.

⁵² Matthew Sherdan, USA Farm Labor, Inc., “What is the Adverse Effect Wage Rate and How it Impacts Your Farm or Agribusiness?”, blog post, September 6, 2024, <https://www.usafarmlabor.com/blog/what-is-the-adverse-effect-wage-rate-and-how-it-impacts-your-farm-business>.

⁵³ The Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA) and the NC Sweetpotato Commission (NCSC), “Five state coalition demands USDA AEWR transparency,” press release, June 11, 2025, <https://vegetablegrowersnews.com/news/usda-aewr-transparency-coalition/>.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, House Agriculture Committee, *Agricultural Labor Working Group, House Committee on Agriculture, Final Report with Policy Recommendations*, committee print, 118th Cong., March 7, 2024, https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/alwg_final_report_-_3.7.23.pdf.

⁵⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *H-2A VISA PROGRAM: Agencies Should Take Additional Steps to Improve Oversight and Enforcement*, GAO-25-106389, November 14, 2024, p. 11, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-106389>. This report shows that 87% of approved H-2A jobs were in the farmworkers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse occupation and 6% were in the agricultural equipment operator occupation. Both of these are occupations for which the AEWR is based on FLS wage estimates.

housing and other costs to employ H-2A workers. These advocates say the AEW is biased upwards for two reasons. First, the AEW is based on gross wages—all wage payments divided by all hours worked—including production bonuses, and yet they are used to set minimum required wages for H-2A positions.⁵⁶ Second, the FLS surveys only farmers and ranchers, asking them the wages they pay directly to hired workers, but a growing share of H-2A workers are employed by farm labor contractors,⁵⁷ who tend to pay lower wages.

Worker advocates see the AEW as the maximum wage that employers would be willing to pay domestic workers, because at any wages higher than the AEW, employers would bring in foreign workers on H-2A visas.⁵⁸ These advocates also point to downward bias in the AEW because it is based on wages measured during the previous calendar year, while wages are increasing from year-to-year.⁵⁹

A recent study estimates how much the AEW increases spill over to wage increases for non-H-2A farmworkers. It estimates these spill overs occur at a rate of 28 cents per dollar of AEW increase.⁶⁰ This study also shows that any increases in the AEW due to mis-measurement in the FLS will fade out over time—there is no ratchet linking the AEW to a cycle of ever-continuing domestic wage increases. There are two reasons for this. First, H-2A workers are only about one in six agricultural workers, so errors in the AEW will only translate into higher wages for one in six workers the following years. Second, H-2A workers are disproportionately employed by farm labor contractors, who are not included in the FLS; thus, any errors in the AEW will mean changes in wages for less than one in six of the workers whose wages are used to set the AEW the following year.⁶¹

Issues with H-2A Recruitment

Despite concerns from some farm employers that required wages for the H-2A program are prohibitively high for them to use the program—and are much higher than agricultural wages in the countries of origin for H-2A workers—there are reports of farm employers having difficulties recruiting H-2A workers.⁶²

Research on H-2A recruitment in Guatemala may explain one way it is possible for wage requirements for the H-2A program to be more than sufficiently high to attract workers at the same time that some employers are having difficulty recruiting H-2A workers. This research

⁵⁶ United Fresh Produce Association, “Comments regarding DOL Docket No. ETA–2019–0007, RIN 1205–AB89, Temporary Agricultural Employment of H–2A Nonimmigrants in the United States, [84 *Federal Register* 144, p.36168ff],” September 24, 2019, <https://www.agri-pulse.com/ext/resources/United-Fresh-H-2A-comments.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Marcelo Castillo et al., *Examining the Growth in Seasonal Agricultural H-2A Labor*, USDA, Economic Research Service, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-226), August 2021, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=102014>.

⁵⁸ UFW Foundation, “Farm Workers Welcome New AEW Rule,” press release, February 28, 2023, https://www.ufwfoundation.org/farm_workers_welcome_new_aewr_rule.

⁵⁹ Zachariah Rutledge et al., “H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rates and U.S. farm wages,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, June 9, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12557>.

⁶⁰ Zachariah Rutledge et al., “H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rates and U.S. farm wages,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, June 9, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12557>.

⁶¹ Zachariah Rutledge et al., “AJAE appendix for H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rates and U.S. farm wages; Appendix A, AEW Measurement Issues and The Ratcheting Effect,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, June 9, 2025, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajae.12557#support-information-section>.

⁶² See, for example, Ross Boissoneau, “Wineries Face Hiring Challenges for the Harvest: Local and H-2A workers are in short supply as demand for NoMi wines grows,” *The Northern Express*, September 28, 2024, <https://www.northernexpress.com/news/feature/wineries-face-hiring-challenges-for-the-harvest/>.

shows that (illegal) recruitment fees and recruitment scams can make it difficult for potential workers to identify actual H-2A positions.⁶³ Programs sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to address these problems by connecting Guatemalan farmworkers with bona fide H-2A job opportunities began in 2019 and were expanded in 2022, but these programs were eliminated in early 2025.⁶⁴

Congressional and Other Proposals Involving Agricultural Wages

In the 119th Congress, The Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3227), which has bipartisan support in the House, contains several provisions that would affect farmworker wages. The bill would (1) expand the supply of farmworkers with legal work status by granting it in the United States for an extendable 5.5-year term to foreign workers who have already been working in agriculture in the country, and allow these workers to apply for permanent legal status; (2) make H-2A visa status more easily transferable between agricultural employers (via the Portable H-2A Visa Pilot Program); (3) expand the supply of farmworkers in the dairy industry by creating a limited number of year-round H-2A visas, with half of these visas initially reserved for that industry; and (4) directly affect wage requirements for H-2A workers by capping annual increases in the requirements to 3.25% within each state and occupation.

Previous versions of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act were the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2023 (H.R. 4319 in the 118th Congress), the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2021 (H.R. 1603 in the 117th Congress), and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2019 (H.R. 5038 in the 116th Congress). The versions of the bill in the 116th and 117th Congresses were passed by the House. It is also similar to the Affordable and Secure Food Act of 2024 (S. 4069) in the 118th Congress and the Affordable and Secure Food Act of 2022 (S. 5282) in the 117th Congress. A version of the bill was negotiated among congressional leaders and agricultural groups as a “compromise immigration bill” in 2019.⁶⁵ Farmworker advocates were split on previous versions of the bill, with some groups opposed to the bill’s expansion of E-Verify and requirement that undocumented workers stay in the low-wage agriculture industry to gain legal status.⁶⁶ Farm employer advocates were also split on versions of the bill, with the American Farm Bureau Federation opposed to the bill in 2022 because its Section 204 would have expanded the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (P.L. 97-470) to cover H-2A workers.⁶⁷ Other groups opposed versions of the bill because giving

⁶³ Arnold “Beau” Brodbeck et al., Executive Summary: Circular Migration Programs Between Guatemala and the United States: Analysis of the Impact on Living Conditions, Migration Intentions, Barriers and Opportunities, USAID, Action Against Hunger Foundation, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), July 2023, <https://auburn.app.box.com/s/qorqtczwb1eay92uaky4yo6e6aeijfh/file/1444461126171>.

⁶⁴ Lisa Held, “H-2A Guestworker Program Impacted by Stalled USDA Payments, Cuts to USAID,” *Civil Eats*, March 21, 2025, <https://civileats.com/2025/03/21/federal-cuts-and-funding-pauses-add-to-farmers-labor-woes/>.

⁶⁵ Pam Marino, “Compromise immigration bill designed to stabilize the agricultural workforce is introduced,” *Monterey County Weekly*, October 30, 2019, https://www.montereycountynow.com/blogs/news_blog/compromise-immigration-bill-designed-to-stabilize-the-agricultural-workforce-is-introduced/article_220367fc-fb71-11e9-87bd-1fdb98b39aa8.html.

⁶⁶ David Bacon, “Why Farmworker Legalization Failed,” *The Nation*, January 10, 2023, <https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/farmworker-legalization-failed/>.

⁶⁷ “AFBF’s Concern of Provision in Farm Workforce Modernization Act,” *Specialty Crop Grower*, August 8, 2022, <https://specialtycrogrower.com/afbfs-concern-over-provision-in-farm-workforce-modernization-act/>. The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) protects non-H-2A migrant and seasonal agricultural workers by (continued...)

permanent legal status for farmworkers who entered the United States without work authorization would mean a pathway to citizenship for these people.⁶⁸

Another bill related to farmworker wages in the 119th Congress is the Supporting Farm Operations Act of 2025 (H.R. 1624). This bill would freeze the AEWR at the rates in effect in December 2023 through December 2026. It would also change the applicable AEWR for H-2A workers who are engaged in multiple types of work from the highest applicable AEWR to the AEWR applicable to these workers' "primary duty." This bill has bipartisan support.

Also in the 119th Congress, 116 Members signed a letter in May 2025 requesting that FY2026 appropriations legislation include a provision freezing the AEWR at January 2023 levels.⁶⁹

During the 118th Congress, the House Committee on Agriculture created a bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group. As discussed previously, the group's final report listed 15 policy recommendations adopted by its members with unanimous support and an additional 6 policies adopted with majority support. All of these recommendations involved the H-2A program, and many involved changes to make it easier for employers to use the H-2A program. One policy adopted with unanimous support would cap year-to-year future increases in the AEWR.⁷⁰

All of the congressional proposals mentioned above involve reducing wage requirements for employers to use the H-2A visa program. In contrast, Project 2025 proposes to:

Cap and phase down the H-2A visa program. Congress should immediately cap this program at its current levels and establish a schedule for its gradual and predictable phasedown over the subsequent 10 to 20 years, producing the necessary incentives for the industry to invest in raising productivity, including through capital investment in agricultural equipment, and increasing employment for Americans in the agricultural sector.⁷¹

The Trump Administration says it has prioritized "shrinking the illegal alien population in the United States."⁷² CRS estimates that approximately 35% of agricultural workers in 2024 may have had no legal work authorization (see CRS In Focus IF12979, *Work Authorization Among Hired Agricultural Workers*). Reducing the number of these workers would likely increase agricultural wages.⁷³

establishing employment standards related to wages, housing, transportation, disclosures, and recordkeeping. DOL has a fact sheet on this act at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/49-mspa>.

⁶⁸ Heritage Action for America, *KEY VOTE "NO" on the Farm Workforce Modernization Act (H.R. 1603)*, March 17, 2021, <https://heritageaction.com/key-vote/key-vote-no-on-the-farm-workforce-modernization-act-h-r-1603>.

⁶⁹ Letter from Bill Huizenga, Member of Congress, Hillary J. Scholten, Member of Congress, and 114 additional Members of Congress, to The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair and The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education, May 22, 2025, https://huizenga.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_h2a_wage_freeze_fy26.pdf.

⁷⁰ U.S. Congress, House Agriculture Committee, *Agricultural Labor Working Group, House Committee on Agriculture, Final Report with Policy Recommendations*, committee print, 118th Cong., March 7, 2024, https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/alwg_final_report_-_3.7.23.pdf.

⁷¹ Jonathan Berry, *Mandate for Leadership 2025: The Conservative Promise ("Project 2025")*, Department of Labor and Related Agencies, The Heritage Foundation, 2023, p. 611, https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_CHAPTER-18.pdf#page=31.

⁷² "Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Establishes Project Homecoming," May 9, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/05/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-establishes-project-homecoming/>.

⁷³ Patrick Thomas, "Farms, Meat Plants Brace for Trump Immigration Crackdown," *Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/business/an-immigration-crackdown-risks-sapping-farms-vital-source-of-labor-88a91df0>.

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