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HortBiz Quiz: Access to labor a problem in KY

By Joshua Knight, Senior Extension Associate, Horticulture, and Brett Wolff, Extension Specialist, Agricultural Economics

Continuing our series analyzing responses from the Horticulture Biz Quiz responses over the last 4 years, this month we look more into the data collected about the current and prospective grower access to labor.

In the survey, respondents were asked, “How much labor can you access (besides yourself)?”

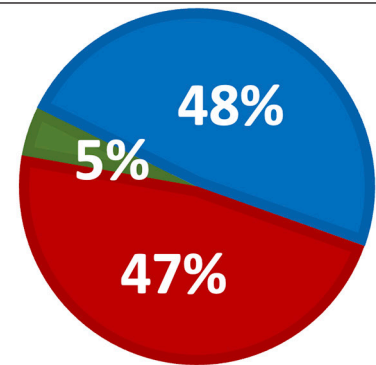
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Coming up

- March 2-3** - Indiana Small Farm Conference, Danville, IN. For details and to register, [click here](#).
- March 3-4** - Kentucky Black Farmers Conference, Knicely Conference Center, Bowling Green. [Click here](#) for details.
- March 13-14** - Agriculture Direct Marketing Summit, virtual. For more information, see **Page 5**.
- March 21** - Developing a Farm Food Safety Plan - Stop Running the Risk! Part 1. Virtual event. 10-11 a.m. ET. For details, see **Page 4**.
- March 28** - Developing a Farm Food Safety Plan - Stop Running the Risk! Part 2. Virtual event. 6-7:30 p.m. ET. For details, see **Page 4**.
- March 29** - Kentucky Local Food Systems Summit, Lexington. For details, [click here](#).

- A lot
- A moderate amount
- Little or none



Responses to question “How much labor do you have access to besides yourself?” N = 133 (Kentucky and bordering states)

With nearly half of Kentucky respondents saying “little or none” and approximately the same amount indicating just a “moderate amount,” access to labor is a significant barrier to horticultural production in Kentucky. Just 5% of respondents claimed access to “a lot” of labor. This mirrors trends from regional and national level Biz Quiz respondents as well as well, which were all within a few

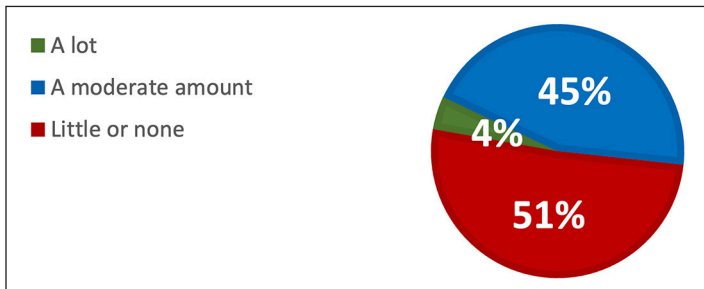
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percentage points of these results.

Even if we examine labor data in the context of responses to other questions (land and capital access), the pattern remains. When considering respondents with over \$5,000 to invest (our moderate- and high-capital categories), more than half of respondents describe their access to labor as “little or none.”



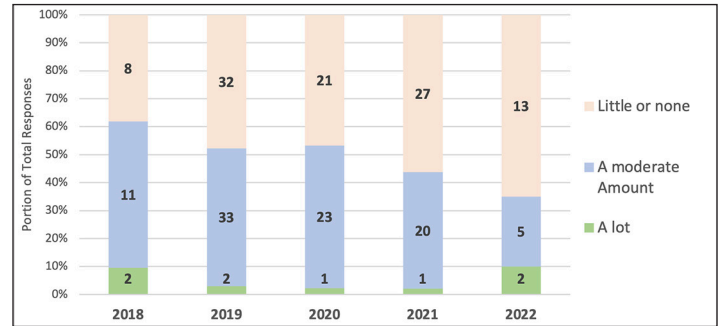
Responses to question “How much labor do you have access to besides yourself?” which also indicated they had greater than \$5,000 to invest in a horticulture enterprise. n = 47 (Kentucky and bordering states)

These responses indicate that accessing labor is a significant barrier to horticultural production and it is a barrier not easily overcome by simply having access to capital. Possible contributing factors here include insufficient wages to attract qualified workers, too much complexity or cost associated with guest worker programs, a general lack of available workers in local communities, or multiple other factors.

We can also consider these responses relative to geographic indicators. At right, we see a map of responses to the Labor Access question, split by access to capital (< \$5,000 is red, >\$5,000 is green), bigger darker circles indicate “a lot” of labor access, smaller lighter circles indicate less/no labor. The areas denoted in pink are urbanized areas, which have higher populations,

larger labor pools, but also increased competition for labor and higher wages. Based on our responses, rural areas generally have less access to capital, but again access to labor seems to be an obstacle nearly everywhere.

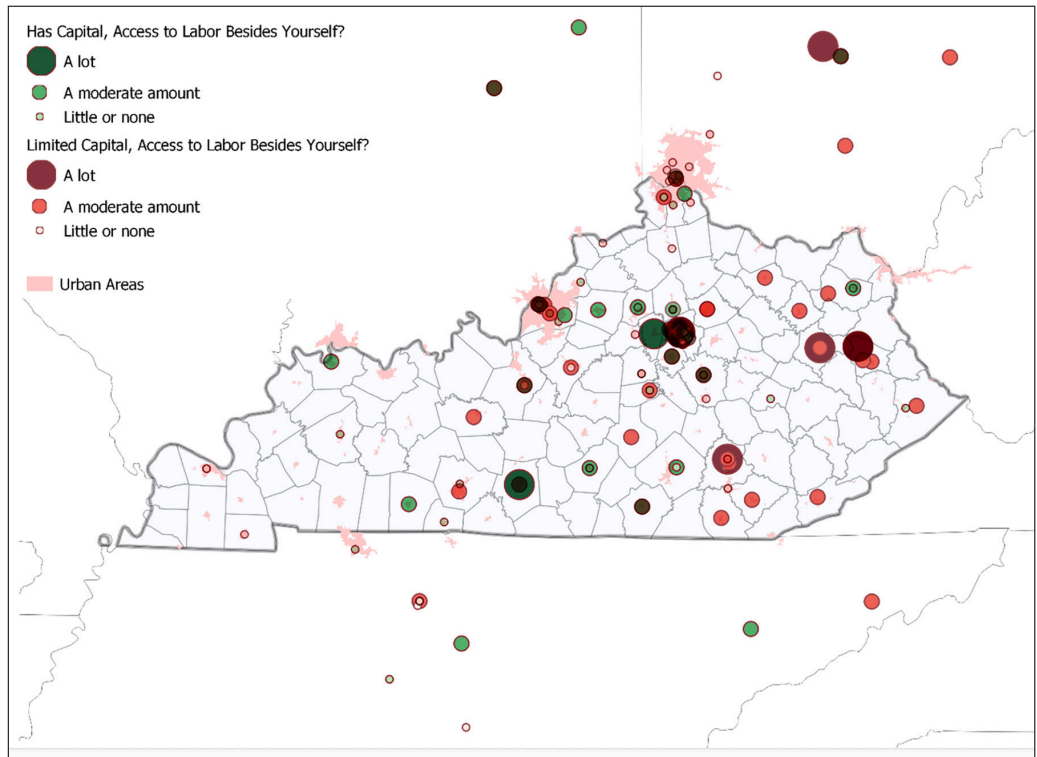
And finally, we can look at the responses to this question in our region over time, year to year.



Characterization of access to labor over time as indicated by responses to HortBiz Quiz from 2018-2022. (Kentucky and bordering states)

We only had partial year data for 2018 and 2022 at the time the data was processed, which is why those years have significantly fewer responses. But if we control for that by showing the portion

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Characterization of access to Capital and Labor indicated by responses to HortBiz Quiz from 2018-2022. (Kentucky and bordering states).

Looking for marketing help? Try Marketing for All 2.0

The Center for Crop Diversification's Marketing for All training for small farms has new modules available. These include:

- **Personal Selling Skills**
If you're in direct marketing, you're in the business of selling. Get some tips on making the sale.
- **Customer Retention & Engagement**
Once you have a customer, you want to keep them! Learn why keeping your regulars is a top priority and how to do it.
- **Digital Marketing Basics**
Learn about some particular strategies and approaches to market your products in the digital landscape.
- **Photography & Digital Ad Tips & Tricks**
Digital marketing is visually driven. Make sure you're catching eyes and boosting your brand.

These supplement the original modules of Marketing Basics, Social Media Basics, Basics of Web Design, Hands-On Visual Merchandizing, Market Signs That Work, Identifying and Exploring New Markets, Understanding and Using Analytics, Record Keeping for Specialty Crops, Using Price Data to Make More Money, Value-Added Product Development, and Accepting More Than Just Cash.

Each training lasts about one hour, and you can

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of responses as they change throughout the year, it appears the access to labor may be getting worse with a larger portion of responses indicating "little or none" with each successive year.

Access to labor in agriculture in general and horticulture specifically are frequently named as top concerns for producers and for ag-focused legislators and economists. While this information

Marketing for All 2.0

Adaptable Marketing Training for Small Farms

New Modules

Personal Selling Skills

If you're in direct marketing, you're in the business of selling. Get some tips on making the sale.

Customer Retention & Engagement

Once you have a customer, you want to keep them! Learn why keeping your regulars is a top priority and how to do it.

Digital Marketing Basics

Learn about some particular strategies and approaches to market your products in the digital landscape.

Photography & Digital Ad Tips & Tricks

Digital marketing is visually-driven. Make sure you're catching eyes and boosting your brand.

Original Modules

Marketing Basics

Product, Price, Place, and Promotion--start your marketing on the right foot.

Social Media Basics

How small businesses can use social media to generate more sales.

Basics of Web Design

We touch on principles and tools to get you going.

Hands-On Visual Merchandizing

We take a show-don't-tell approach to learning about display design. Participants can brainstorm and discuss the merits of different designs in a hands-on workshop.

Market Signs That Work

From getting people to your market or business to trying to communicate with them once they've arrived, this workshop can help.

Identifying and Exploring New Markets

Learn how to find and compare opportunities to grow your business.

Understanding and Using Analytics

Big companies collect BIG data. Learn how you can leverage their technology for your business.

Record Keeping for Specialty Crops

We focus on basics and making small changes for big results.

Using Price Data to Make More Money

Once you've figured your costs, how do you set your price? We show how to use CCD price data to make sure the price is right.

Value-Added Product Development

Get your bearings when developing a value added product.

Accepting More Than Just Cash

Customers don't always carry cash any more. We take a look at how and why you may want to think about taking plastic.



Funded through a Specialty
Crop Block Grant



Each training lasts ~ 1 hour.

Mix & match topics to meet your group's needs.

To schedule: email brett.wolff@uky.edu or call 859-218-4384

mix and match topics to meet your group's needs. To schedule a training, please email brett.wolff@uky.edu or call 859-218-4384.

Marketing for All is funded through a Kentucky Specialty Crop Block Grant.

is not new, some of the wrinkles presented here might help us better understand the Kentucky horticulture producer landscape, and it also reinforces the need for producers to verify that they will be able to access reliable labor before they engage in any of the many labor-intensive horticultural enterprises.

To take the Hort BizQuiz yourself, click this link: https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_00GkXJHVHkPPdxH.

Surveys to help growers who participate in NAP

By Delia Scott, Agriculture Extension Associate, Beginning Farmers – Fruit and Vegetable

As participants in the NAP program, Kentucky growers are required to provide price figures and yields from prior cropping years to their Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to calculate the assistance funding that they receive. If a grower does not have price figures, national wholesale prices are used, which are substantially lower than those that Kentucky growers who market retail receive.

The Kentucky State FSA office will accept prices provided by UK Extension if a Kentucky grower does not have historical price records. In order to acquire this data, the University of Kentucky, Kentucky State Horticultural Society, Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association, and Kentucky Horticulture Council are partnering to collect annual price records, which will be averaged. The averages will be provided to the state FSA office.

Please provide the average prices for which you marketed your fruit and vegetables for the 2022 season using the following links. The information that you supply will be presented only as group

OAK field days include two-part virtual Food Safety training

From the Organic Association of Kentucky website

Farmer Field Days in 2023 offered by the Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) include Developing a Farm Food Safety Plan - Stop Running the Risk! virtual events on Zoom on March 21st from 10-11 a.m. ET and March 28th from 6-7:30 p.m. ET.

Join this two-part virtual workshop to learn the basics of developing a farm food safety plan. In the first session, we will learn the content and structure of a farm food safety plan from Bryan Brady (UK's Food Connection). This will include common policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), risk assessments, recordkeeping, and corrective actions. Kentucky farmers Maggie Dungan (Salad Days Farm) and Ford Waterstrat (Sustainable Harvest Farm) will share their experiences and recommendations based on developing and

TAKE THESE NAP* PRICING SURVEYS

***NONINSURED CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Help KY fruit & vegetable growers set a local pricing basis for crop insurance claims!

Without KY specific data, growers will have to use national data that may be significantly lower than local prices.

No NAP coverage required to take the survey!

NAP FRUIT SURVEY

NAP VEGETABLE SURVEY

SCAN THE CODES TO TAKE THE QUICK SURVEYS

averages and your identity will remain confidential. To take the surveys, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/22FruitNAP>, or <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/22VegNAP>.

implementing their food safety plans. For the second session, Bryan will provide food safety plan templates and log sheets and explore how they can be designed to fit your unique operation in order to reduce risks, minimize costs, and improve efficiency. Morgan Waldner and Tyler Goodlett of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Produce Safety Program will join both sessions to share information on what your farm needs to do to be in compliance, including information on inspections, exemptions, training, and resources.

This workshop is intended for any specialty crop (fruits & veggies) producers. Registration is required and covers both virtual events. Please register at https://oak.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_mcform&view=ngforms&id=2156181#!/. For more information, [click here](#).

Marketing Summit set for March 13th-14th

From the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) Facebook page

The 2023 Agriculture Direct Marketing Summit is a virtual event (6-9 p.m. EDT) for agriculture producers selling directly to consumers. Sessions will cover social media tactics, maximizing your marketing resources, hosting farmers market events, improving customer communication, and more. The event is co-hosted by the Kentucky Center for Ag and Rural Development, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Farm Bureau, the Kentucky Horticulture Council, and the University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Economics Market Ready Program. [Register here.](#)

Sustainable Ag Webinar

with Jackson Rolett from



**THURSDAY
MARCH 23
2023**
6:30pm ET/
5:30pm CT

Join us to learn about
implementing appropriate or
no-tillage, cover cropping,
& mulching in small-scale
market gardens.

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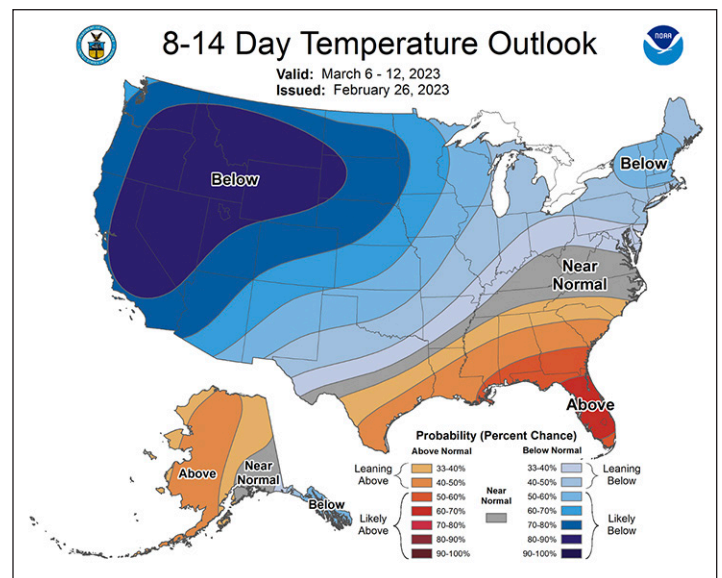
This webinar series is part of a Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) project.

Expect temperatures to be near normal during first weeks of March, wetter throughout

By Joshua Knight, Senior Extension Associate, Horticulture

The precipitation forecasting from the NOAA's Climate Prediction Center for the month of March shows a consistent above-average chance of wetter than normal conditions across the Commonwealth throughout March as well as the Midwest more generally. The longer range outlooks indicate the spring season (March-April-May) will likely be wetter than average throughout the Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley regions. This may create obstacles to scheduling primary tillage during planting season and other field work, as saturated soils are prone to compaction.

The forecast for temperatures in Kentucky calls for near normal/typical temperatures, especially



in the first weeks of the month. However, moving into the latter half of March we may very well see lower than averages temperatures as a cold weather system moves across the U.S. Depending on the severity of this anomaly, it may threaten fruit tree blooms and delay growth. So far, this spring may be tricky for growers to navigate.

Who is a CEA grower?

A more inclusive view of Kentucky's growing AgTech Industry

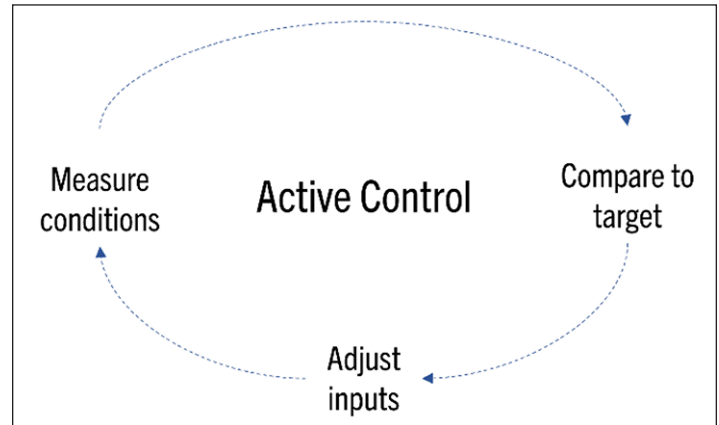
By Arundathi Sharma, Extension Associate
for Controlled Environment Agriculture

This article is the first in a series that will answer common questions or address factors that growers may want to consider when deciding whether to invest in a new CEA-tech upgrade.

At the end of last year, a [feasibility study](#) concerning the establishment of a CEA (controlled-environment agriculture) industry ecosystem in Kentucky was published. One of the recommendations out of the study specifically aims to ensure that the interests of small to mid-size growers are represented in this development: *Establish a clear pathway for open field and low- and mid-tech high tunnel growers to grow towards high-tech CEA production.*

While a full high-tech operation might not be for everyone, some growers may find benefits in employing only certain CEA techniques, or in diversifying their business by supplementing their regular production with indoor cultivation. In fact, many small and mid-size operations in Kentucky are already using CEA practices and may not even realize it. Later articles in this series will address specific technologies, but for now, let's first establish what we mean when we talk about "controlled-environment agriculture" by answering a common question: *What makes a greenhouse different from a high tunnel?*

Unheated high tunnels are widely used in Kentucky as a means of "season extension," whereas greenhouses are used for "environmental control" – one would call it a "season decoupling" method. "Season extension" can be understood as passive control: by simply putting plastic over the crop, you can increase the temperature underneath and delay/reduce the impact of outside weather, but you cannot set specific growing conditions. "Season decoupling" is active control: using energy inputs (lighting, climate control, etc.), we can achieve and maintain our desired growing conditions no matter what the outside weather is like,



thereby enabling predictability of crop performance and year-round production. The diagram shows how the feedback loop is key to an active control system – this feedback loop is what defines a growing system as "controlled-environment growing," as opposed to simply a passive "covered" growing system.

This means that growers who put a heater in their high tunnels when outside temperatures drop may be growing in a low/mid-tech controlled environment! If you're ever unsure whether a system qualifies as "CEA," look for the feedback loop: am I frequently measuring/monitoring the target parameter (e.g., light intensity, air temperature)? Is the measurement compared to a set-point I've chosen for the crop ($450\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$, 72°F)? Do I adjust machines in the system in order to get closer to the target conditions (e.g., dim down lights, turn on A/C)? Does this process repeat?

UK Extension and the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) are collaborating on an effort to characterize the controlled-environment growing industry in Kentucky and to ensure the particular needs of Kentucky's CEA growers are being met. This work begins with a broad survey of **all** growers across the state to understand their experiences and perceptions of covered and controlled-environment growing. Your response to this [two-minute survey](#) will help us create better programs in the future! Reach out to Arundathi Sharma with any feedback or CEA questions at arundathi.sharma@uky.edu. Thank you for your participation!

CFAES

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LOVELAND, OHIO

Blooms & Berries Farm Market

Join us to tour Bloom & Berries Farm Market. You will learn how they have grown their operation over the past four generations. You will hear from the owners/operators, tour the market barn, produce stands, play yard and petting farm, and garden center. You will learn how they have taken advantage of agritourism to grow and sustain their family farm.

Marmalade Lily

After touring the farm, we will travel a short distance down the road to meet at the Marmalade Lily event venue and wedding barn. We hear about this hobby turned thriving floral event venue. We will enjoy lunch, and hearing from the folks at the Marmalade Lily and a number of experts in the Agritourism field.

Ohio Agritourism Conference

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Greenhouse Educators Training scheduled for March 27th

UK Extension is hosting another installment of Greenhouse Educators Training. This time, our webinar will feature two Kentucky schoolteachers, Chris Thomas (LaRue Co.) and Brian Prewitt (Whitley Co.), who will share their experiences teaching and maintaining indoor agriculture systems at their schools. The event will take place online on March 27th at 4:15PM (EDT), and should run 30-45 minutes, including a live audience Q&A. If you cannot attend, the session will also be recorded for later viewing.

Please reach out to Arundathi Sharma (arundathi.sharma@uky.edu) for the link and password to the Zoom meeting if you have not already received one.

Agents can also access the training on KERS and are welcome to forward their invitations to educators in their counties who might be interested in attending. We look forward to seeing you there!

Census of Ag extended

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has extended data collection for the 2022 Census of Agriculture through the spring to ensure all farmers and ranchers take advantage of the opportunity to be represented in the widely used data. It's not too late to respond online at agcounts.usda.gov or by mail. Respond today and learn more at nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

Thanks for reading!

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Christy Cassady, Extension Specialist

