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**MIGRANT LABOR IN
PRODUCTION
AGRICULTURE**

Overview

- ❑ Borders tightening
- ❑ Random government inspections
- ❑ Process takes time, effort, and creates hassle for most, it's a process that production agriculturists are willing to take long before considering the alternative – no migrant labor at all.

Problem

- ⦿ Lack of technology to “replace” labor
- ⦿ Unemployed citizens will not settle
- ⦿ More government restrictions on labor
 - Difficult for producers
 - Creates hassle to employers

Question

- ⦿ Is the process of certifying/authorizing migrant laborers worth the time and effort put forth by producers?
- ⦿ Or is having no migrant labor at all a better solution to the problem?

Labor vs. Capital

- ⦿ Labor intensive focuses primarily on production by hand/man labor
- ⦿ Capital intensive focuses primarily on production with technological advancements

Labor vs. Capital

Labor Intensive

- Fruits, vegetables, nuts
 - Watermelon, grapes, pumpkins, oranges, etc.
- Some livestock and dairy productions

Capital Intensive

- Grains
 - Wheat, corn, soybeans, sunflowers, etc.
- Hay

Labor defined:

- ⦿ An expenditure of physical or mental effort especially when difficult or compulsory
 - Human activity that provides the good or services in an economy
 - The services preformed by workers for wages as distinguished from those rendered by entrepreneurs for profits

Fact

- ◎ Hired farm workers make up one-third of workforce
 - Over half of these are illegal and not authorized
- ◎ Consequences:
 - \$\$\$\$
 - Loss of labor
 - Decreased production

Authorizing Immigrants

- ⦿ Different types of permits available
 - Permanent worker permits
 - Temporary worker permits

Permanent Worker Authorization

- ⦿ Must be a full time job opportunity
- ⦿ Job must be available to U.S. citizens
- ⦿ Requirements must not be tailored to foreign workers
- ⦿ Employer must pay at least minimum wage

Temporary Worker Authorization

- ⦿ H2-A permit
- ⦿ According to the Department of Labor
 - “...there are not sufficient workers who are able, willing, qualified, and available...”
 - Temporary or seasonal nature

H2-A Requirements

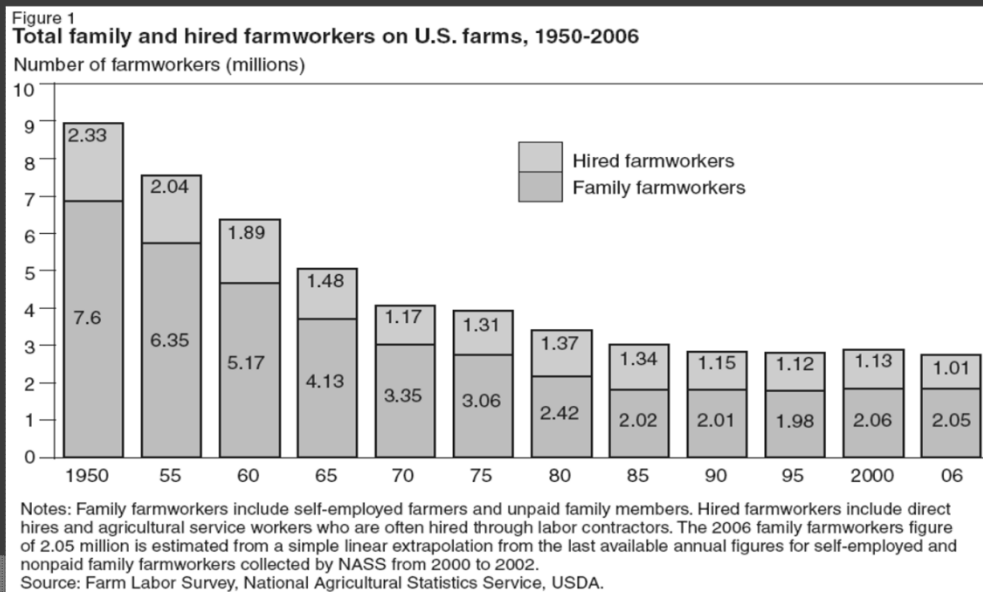
- ⦿ Must try to find U.S. workers
 - Advertising and recruiting
- ⦿ Pay must equal to that which U.S. workers would receive
- ⦿ Provide
 - Housing
 - Meals or kitchen facilities
 - Transportation

H2-A Requirements cont.

- ⦿ Provide
 - Workers compensation insurance
 - Tools and supplies
 - Accurate records
- ⦿ Employment must be guaranteed for at least three-fourths of the workdays in the contract period
- ⦿ Fee

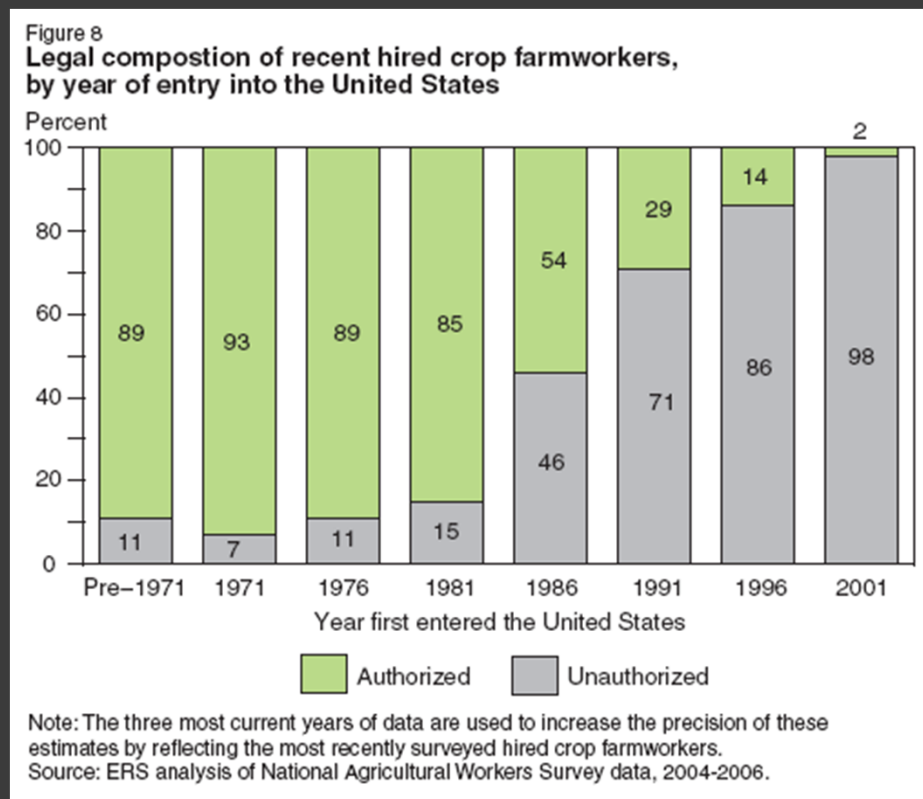
Research

- 1.01 million hired farm workers made up one third of 3 million people employed in agriculture in 2006
- Family member workers decreased
- Hired farm worker numbers increased



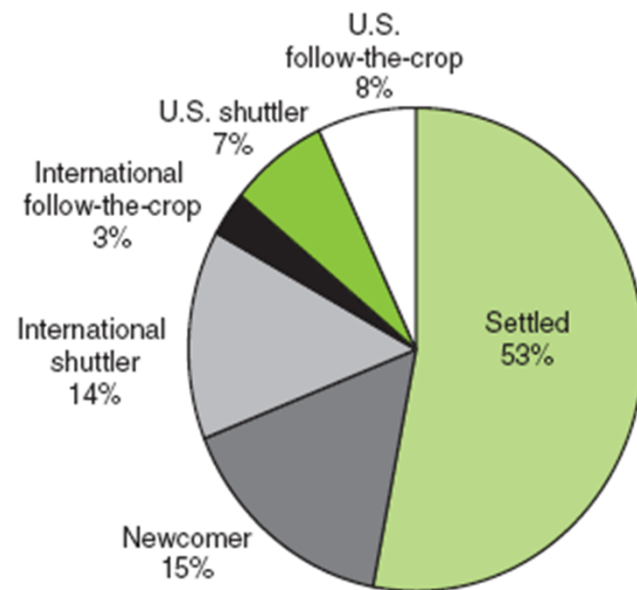
Research

- Over half of all hired crop farm workers lack legal authorization



Research

Figure 15
Hired crop farmworkers by migrant type,
1989-2006 averages



Notes: The National Agricultural Workers Survey does not survey hired livestock workers.

Source: ERS analysis of National Agricultural Workers Survey data, 1989-2006.

- Settled farm workers tend to earn more and have “safer” conditions

Research

Demographics

Table 7

Select demographic, employment, and health characteristics of hired crop farmworkers, by migrant status, 1989-2006 averages

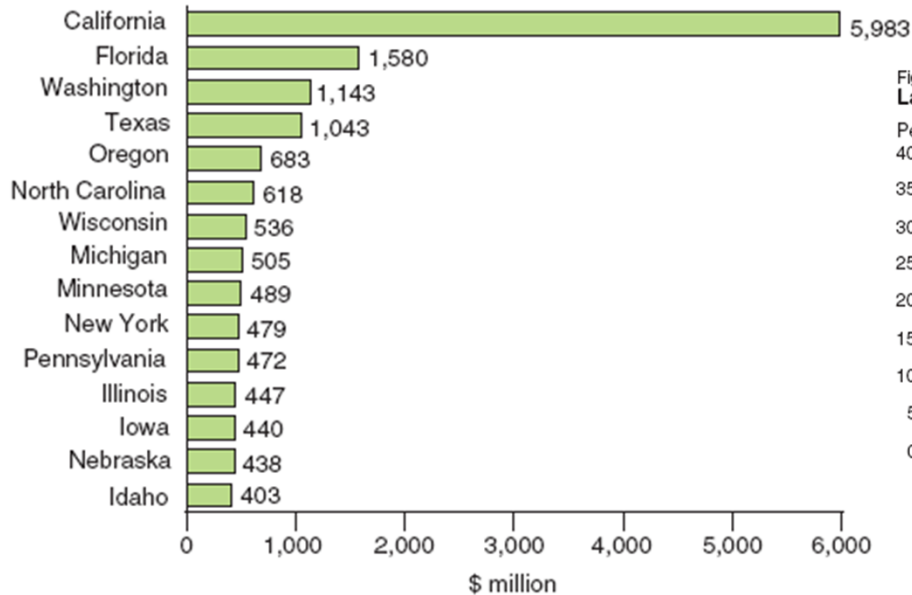
	Migrants	Nonmigrants
Demographic characteristics		
Median age	27	32
Percent female	14.0	29.3
Percent married	52.3	57.1
Percent Hispanic	95.3	68.1
Number children 17 and younger doing farmwork	0.57	0.17
Employment characteristics		
Median years of education	6	9
Median years of U.S. experience	3	8
Percent with no knowledge of English	66.9	33.1
Percent unauthorized	66.2	27.1
Percent employed by labor contractors	25.9	14.2
Mean wage	\$6.05	\$6.55
Median wage	\$5.55	\$6.00
Median number of weeks worked previous year	19.6	38.9
Health characteristics		
Percent with health insurance	9.1	35.3
Percent who have used health services in past 2 years	29.1	60.9
Percent reporting health condition in past 2 years	9.7	19.8

Source: ERS analysis of National Agricultural Workers Survey data, 1989-2006.

Research

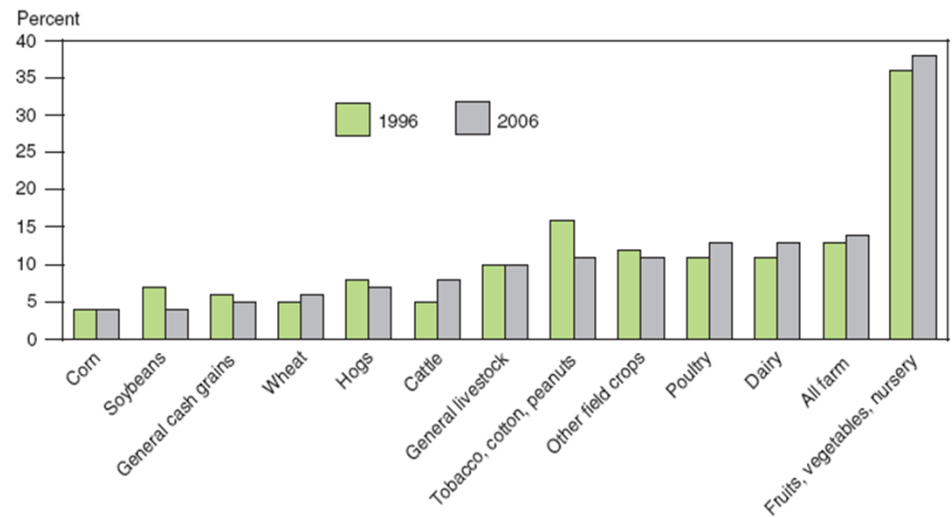
- California, Florida, Texas, Washington, Oregon, and North Carolina account for half of all hired farm workers

Figure 5
Top 15 States for hired farm and contract farm labor expenses, 2002



Source: ERS analysis of 2002 Census of Agriculture data.

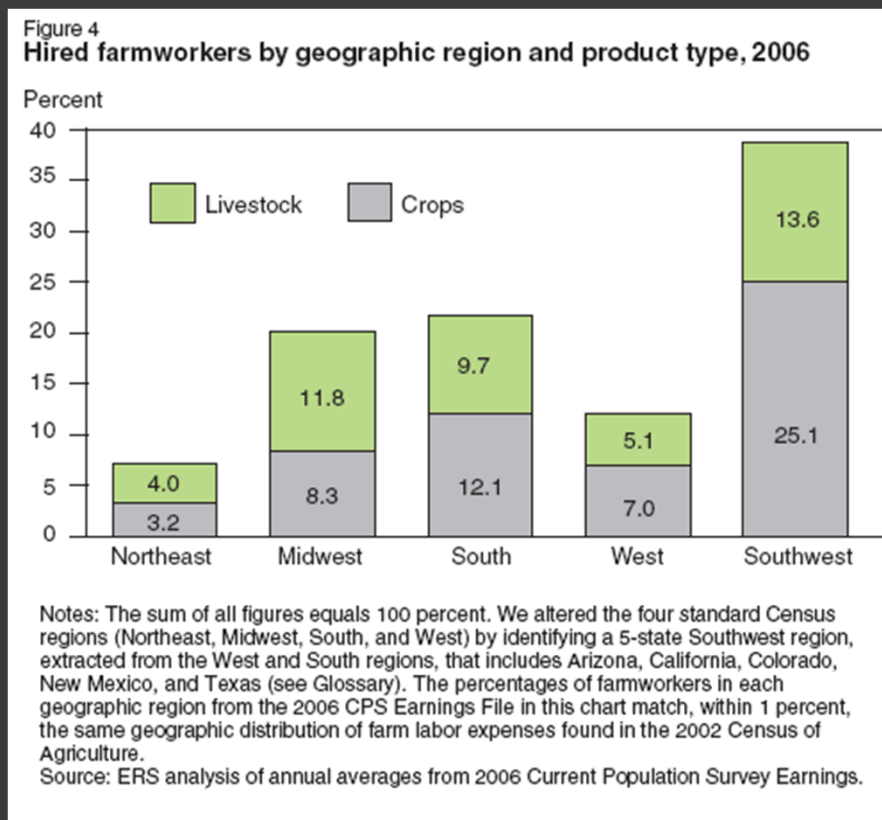
Figure 3
Labor's share of total cash expenses, by agricultural product, 1996 and 2006



Source: ERS analysis of 1996 and 2006 ARMS data.

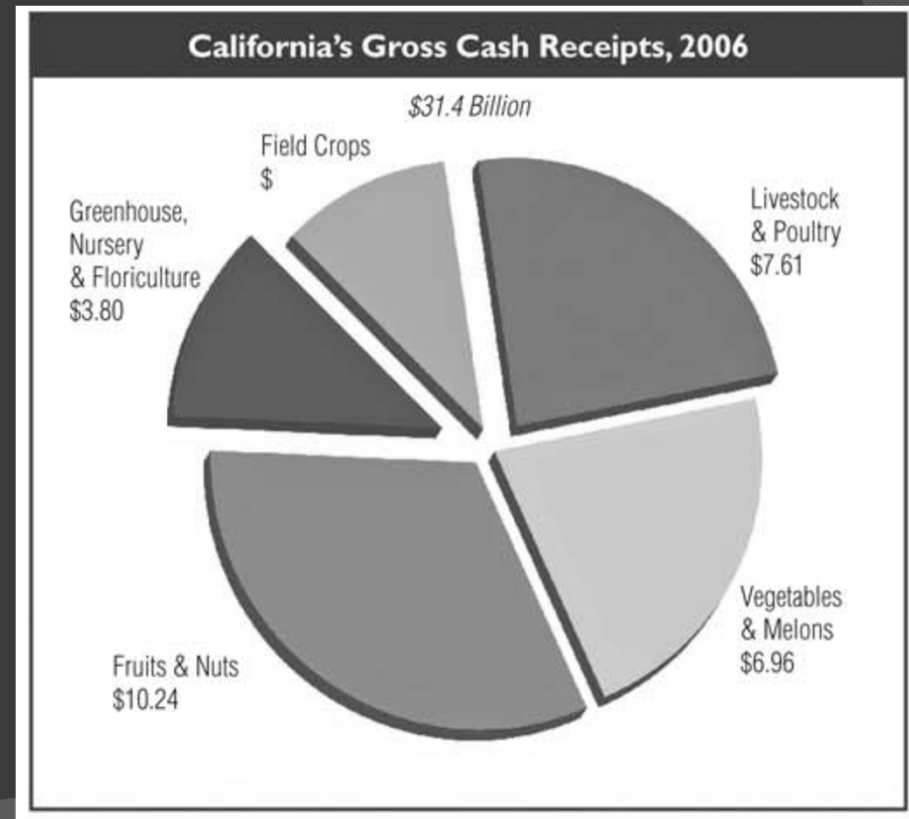
Research

Southwest Region employs majority



Research

- ◎ The majority of crops grown in California are labor intensive
 - Vegetables
 - Melons
 - Fruits
 - Nuts



Methods

- ⦿ Analysis of legalizing migrant labor versus no migrant labor at all
- ⦿ Simple supply and demand

Results

- ⦿ Legalization process
 - Time consuming
 - Hassle
 - Numerous requirements
 - Precise records

Results

- ⦿ No migrant labor
 - Increased demand for workers
 - Decreased production
 - More imports of foreign goods

Results

- ⦿ Migrant labor is a demand in the agriculture industry
- ⦿ Decrease in supply of labor will lead to an increase in demand for labor
- ⦿ American citizens who are unemployed are able, available, and qualified, but NOT many willing.

Question

- ⦿ Is the process of authorizing migrant labor to work in the United States superior to having no migrant labor at all?

- ⦿ YES

Conclusions

- ◎ Best said
 - “Some growers are planting fewer acres than normal as they scramble to save the season. [The trade association Western Growers] is worried that the lack of workers – mostly immigrants from Mexico and Central America – could cause \$1 billion in losses to California Agriculture this year.”
- ◎ Migrant labor is, and always will be, demanded in the agriculture production industry.

Resources

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QUESTIONS?