



## INTRODUCTION OF THE AG LABOR CRISIS

Farmers face a shortage of legally authorized and experienced workers each year which threatens the sustainability and security of U.S. based agricultural production. Legislation is needed to provide farmers and ranchers, across all of agriculture, access to a legal and stable workforce. American farmers are facing an escalating challenge to find enough labor to continue to put food on our tables. Hiring a workforce from the domestic population is becoming less viable for growers and ranchers as Americans have become unwilling to do this difficult work. This dire labor situation is one of the top issues facing American farmers and American farmers have been asking Congress to address this problem for over twenty years, without success. As a result, over half of the existing workforce lacks legal proper documentation to work in the United States.

Farmers pay fair wages for workers, but domestic U.S. workers are no longer willing and available to fill open jobs on farms. To fill these vacant positions, farmers have turned increasingly to recruiting foreign labor through the H-2A program, but this program is not open to all farms (such as dairies or mushrooms) and the program poses challenges for farmers who can use it. It is expensive, difficult to navigate, and imposes regulatory demands that are particularly onerous for small and medium sized producers.

Farmers need the help of Congress to provide long-lasting solutions to these long-standing problems. We call for the protection of qualifying, existing farm workers and their immediate family members so that they can continue working in U.S. agriculture and provide much needed stability of the ag workforce. We also call for necessary improvements to the H-2A guest worker program, including reforms to the wage structure and program eligibility, to allow for the sustainability of U.S. based agricultural production in all sectors.