

Migrant Farm Workers

Diana Romano (OK), NEAFCS Diversity Sub-Committee Member

Most of us have heard the term migrant farm worker, but do we really know what it means or who they are? As a Family and Consumer Sciences professional, it is in our best interest to get educated on this topic and know these facts:

- Most migrant farm workers are Mexican males in their mid-30s. Many come by themselves to work and send money back to their families.
- Some bring their families along and often have small children living with them. Many of them share a house with other families.
- Approximately 36% are unauthorized to live or work in the US. Few have a special visa for temporary agriculture workers.
- Every year around 2 million migrants come to work in farms to plant, harvest and pack fruit and vegetables.
- Migrants fuel our nation's \$100 billion agriculture industry, doing the toughest jobs that keep our farms running.
- In 2019, more than half of all hired farmworkers in the United States were immigrants. Many arrive with farming experience from working in or owning farms in their own countries
- They have a strong work ethic, often working extra hours without demanding more pay.
- About 61% of U.S. farm workers' income fall below the poverty level. Many have a median income of less than \$7500 a year.
- Their countries' problems push them to immigrate to look for a better life. Some of the problems are violence, civil unrest, economic crisis, narcoterrorism, lack of jobs, and land reforms.
- The US was built on the work and sacrifices of many migrant workers. In the past, the US promoted the influx of farm workers to help create the massive agricultural production we have today.



I would like to end with this quote by Eduardo Gonzales: "The faces of immigrants have changed, but their pioneering spirit, courage, determination, ability to thrive, and dreams of securing a better future for their children remain the same"

Sources

- Migrant farm workers: Our Nation's Invisible Population. Eduardo Gonzalez – Cornell University Extension
- Finding from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 1997-1998: A Demographic and Employment Profile of United States Farm workers US Department of Labor.
- The Human Cost of Food: Farm workers lives, labor and advocacy Edited by Charles D. Thompson and Melinda Wiggings
- Working Poor: Farm workers in the United States by David Griffith and Ed Kissam.