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Solutions for Out-of-School Youth Agricultural Trends Newsletter

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Director's Message

It has been a long, hot summer for most of the U.S. Not only has the intense heat, drought and flooding affected state agriculture but another important issue is making its impact felt in many states.

In this month's AG Trends Newsletter, we explore the impact of worker shortages in many states on the overall economy. If you have an idea for an article or would like to comment on one, please e-mail me at tkalic@embarqmail.com. Please visit our Solutions for Out-of-School Youth website at www.osymigrant.org for more information on identification and recruitment as well as providing supportive and/instructional services to

Out-of-School youth. Thank you for your continued support of OSY.

Tracie Kalic,
Director, Solutions for Out-of-School Youth



Shortages of Farmworkers in Georgia

Source: *GA Criminals Sub for Immigrant Farmworkers—Bloomberg.com*

SOSY PARTICIPATING STATES

COLORADO, FLORIDA, IDAHO, ILLINOIS, KANSAS, MARYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, MINNESOTA, MISSISSIPPI, MONTANA, NEBRASKA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, NORTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, TENNESSEE, VERMONT, WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal wants "criminals" to pick berries and peaches because of a farm-labor shortage being blamed on the state's new law cracking down on undocumented immigrants.

A state survey released yesterday reported that more than 11,000 agricultural jobs stand vacant during the height of the state's fruit and vegetable picking season. Some of Georgia's 100,000 probationers, of whom 25 percent are unemployed, can help, he said.

"The agriculture industry is the No. 1 economic engine in Georgia," Deal said in a prepared statement. "It is my sincere hope to find viable and law-abiding solutions to the current problem our farmers face."

Farming is a \$5.1 billion industry in Georgia, according to its Agriculture Department. About 28 percent of the state's agricultural output in 2009 came from crops that require picking, according to a report from the University of Georgia's Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development.

The law's impact on farm labor was swift, said Bryan Tolar, president of the Georgia Agribusiness Council in Atlanta, which opposed the immigration law.

"We have always had some challenges trying to find enough workers at the right times to harvest crops, but the drop-off we've seen this year compared to last year is unprecedented," Tolar said in a telephone interview.

Migrant laborers are skipping the state out of fear, he said.

Deal's proposal to set unemployed probationers to harvesting is welcome among farmers, who are currently trying to bring in crops such as blackberries and peaches, Tolar said. The peak picking season ends in early to mid-July, he said.

The peak picking season ends in early to mid-July, he said. The old phrase 'die on the vine' is what we're looking at here," Tolar said.

Farmers ask little about workers' background, he said. "If you're strong enough to do this work, you're good, as long as you don't show up stoned or drunk or pregnant."



Shortages of Farmworkers in GA cont.

Georgia's Department of Corrections Commissioner Brian Owens, Labor Commissioner Mark Butler and Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black will work to connect unemployed probationers with farmers who need labor, Deal said.

Those involved with probation are less pleased with the proposal than farmers, said Carl Wicklund, executive director of the Lexington, Kentucky-based

American Probation and Parole Association. It's a return to the days when convicts were sentenced to cultivate the land, he said in a telephone interview.

"In the old days, they had work farms," he said.

The Georgia proposal will be of little help to probationers trying to improve their lives, he said, because the work is temporary.

"They'll get no unemployment, no insurance and most of them aren't going to be farm workers long term."



Nationally Hired Agriculture Workers Down 5 %

There were 1,186,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of July 10-16, 2011, down 5 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 836,000 were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 350,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$10.90 per hour during the July 2011 reference week, up 11 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$10.24 per hour, up 15 cents from last July. While livestock workers earned \$10.28 per hour compared with \$10.15 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$10.25 per hour, was up 14 cents from last year. The number of hours worked averaged 41.3 for hired workers during the survey week, up 1 percent from a year ago.

The largest decreases in the number of hired workers from last year occurred in California and in the Pacific (Oregon and Washington), Northern Plains (Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota), and Corn Belt I (Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) regions. In California and in the Pacific region, the wet spring and cooler than

normal summer temperatures delayed crop development, reducing the demand for hired workers. Above normal temperatures, heavy rains, and high winds in the Northern Plains and Corn Belt I regions discouraged crop progress and slowed field activity. Therefore, fewer hired workers were needed.

The largest increases in the number of hired workers from last year occurred in the Lake (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) and Appalachian II (Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia) regions and in Florida. In the Lake and Appalachian II regions, the wet conditions during last year's reference week slowed field activity for two days. Drier conditions this year allowed fieldwork to progress rapidly, increasing the demand for hired workers. Recent rains in Florida improved crop growth which led to heightened activity on farms causing more hired workers to be necessary.

Hired worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in Florida and in the Corn Belt II (Iowa and

Missouri), Appalachian II, and Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas) regions. The higher wages in Florida were due to strong demand from the nursery and greenhouse industry. In the Corn Belt II region, the higher wages were due to a lower proportion of part time workers. There was also a larger percentage of more highly skilled machine operators on grain farms. Fewer hours worked combined with fewer part time workers in the Appalachian II region led to the increase in wages. In the Southern Plains region, there were more salaried workers working fewer hours which pushed the average wage up.

USDA Agriculture Statistics Report August 28th, 2011



In WA Farmers Face Shortage of Seasonal Workers

Some Washington farmers are worried their work force is dwindling. Most of the farmers rely on seasonal workers, and more than half of those workers in Washington are undocumented immigrants. Some farmers say their once-loyal workers are staying in Mexico because of the dangers of crossing the border with the stronger enforcement of border laws. Others say the immigrants who now live in the state permanently are leaving seasonal work to find year-round jobs. Mark Ellis, a University of Washington geography professor, points to a similar concern for farmers: Once immigrants get offers of higher-paying or longer-term jobs, they will take them. "People are desperate with high unemployment so you have a larger than normal floating pool," Ellis said. But "if the economy picks up and the flow from the south stays the same, that knocking on the door will stop." One Lower Yakima Valley farmer, who usually hires 20 to 25 workers from Mexico for his cherry and fruit farm

every summer, said he found himself without help at the beginning of the season. The farmer, who did not want to be identified, said his laborers attempted to cross the border three times and got caught each time. Finally, they called to say they were staying in Mexico. Meanwhile, legal migration for seasonal work continues to face obstacles. Dan Fazio, director of the Washington Farm Labor Association, encourages farmers to bring workers from Mexico legally, but said it's a slow and difficult process. Only 20 growers in the state bring legal seasonal workers through the federal guest-work program, or H-2A, according to Fazio. In that program, the farmer pays for visas and transportation. Those 20 usually bring over about 3,000 legal workers. Andrej Suske runs a nursery in Redmond, Wash., and uses the H-2A program. This year he needed workers in early February, but did not get them until one month later after negotiating through government bureaucracies. Suske said he paid more than \$50,000 in recruitment and consulate fees and to

transport, house and pay his workers. Farmers who hire undocumented workers don't have to deal with this cost and hassle, Fazio said. "We just need a system for people to come into the country legally to do the jobs that Americans don't do," Fazio said. "And it's not that Americans are lazy, but no one wants a job where you work for six months a year, unless you're making \$100,000." The state usually needs about 60,000 seasonal workers each year from June to October. Fazio said farmers have to find a way to make the work last all year; otherwise, their laborers might look for jobs in other industries, such as construction. "We can't compete with the construction industry because that's a seasonal job where people work 10 months, not five or six," Fazio said. Source: The Seattle Times—August 5, 2011



Shortage of Workers Imperils Yuma AZ

C.R. Waters, president of the Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association, said it will take 30,000 seasonal workers to harvest the sea of winter vegetables grown in Yuma County, where the fruit-and-vegetable crop was valued at \$745 million in 2004. The area produces 90 percent of the winter vegetables consumed in the U.S. and Canada, and 98 percent of the iceberg lettuce.

If growers can't find enough workers, some crops may go unpicked. That could hike prices at the supermarket and create substantial financial losses for farmers.

Last year, however, some growers overproduced, so prices stayed low even though some labor contractors reported a 30 percent shortage of workers.

In other parts of Arizona, pepper farmers and others struggled to hire enough hands, as well. Yuma growers won't know how severe the labor shortage will be until the harvest kicks

into high gear just after Thanksgiving. To hedge their bets, they planted 15 percent fewer acres this year.

Labor scarcities are common in the agricultural industry: Picking vegetables by hand stooped under the hot sun is tough, backbreaking work.

But growers and farm advocates say the shortages, even with thousands of legal Mexican laborers, have become more severe as stricter immigration enforcement, tighter border security and increased competition from construction and other industries have shrunk the pool of seasonal workers.

The shortages are not just limited to the Yuma region. Vegetable growers in Colorado, pear growers in northern California, and apple growers in Washington, all have lacked workers.

Many growers blame conservatives in Congress for failing to pass legislation that would have expanded a guest-worker program for agriculture. If the



labor troubles continue, they warn, more growers will move crops to Mexico and other countries with access to cheap labor.

In the meantime, the harvest season has created a sense of urgency in Yuma.

"You can have the best crop in the world, but if you don't have the labor to harvest it, it's going to rot in the field," Waters said.

Source: The Arizona Republic



Violent Mexican Drug Gang, Zetas, Taking Control of Migrant Smuggling

ARRIAGA, Mexico — One of Mexico's most powerful criminal gangs has muscled into the migrant-smuggling racket, changing what had been a relatively benign if risky industry of independent operators into a centralized business that often has deadly consequences for those who try to operate outside it.

Los Zetas, who earned a reputation for brutality by gunning down thousands of

Mexicans in the ongoing battle for drug-smuggling routes to the United States, now control much of the illicit trade of moving migrant workers toward the U.S. border, experts in the trade say.

They've brought logistical know-how, using tractor-trailer trucks to carry ever larger loads of people and charging higher prices, as much as \$30,000 per head for migrants from Asia and Africa who seek to get to the United

States.

They've also brought an unprecedented level of intimidation and violence to the trade. Los Zetas or their allies often kidnap and hold for ransom poor migrants who try to operate outside the system. If relatives don't wire payment, the migrants sometimes are executed and dumped in mass graves or press-ganged into jobs with the criminal group.

Immigrant Worker Shortage Could Mean Fewer Crops



Some Georgia farmers have indicated they're not going to plant any fall crops as they continue to struggle with an immigrant labor shortage. At Minor Brothers farm in Sumter County, owner Dick Minor says the labor shortage cost him tens of thousands of dollars. "We left quite a bit in the field," said Minor. "We didn't have enough labor to pick our entire cucumber crop. We left probably 20 to 25-percent of it."

Minor says he's now mulling over how much of a crop to plant in the fall. Other farmers who've suffered losses due to the immigrant labor shortage have indicated they won't be planting this fall. "We've got some saying they'd rather not make any money because they didn't plant than lose money if they plant and



can't get the labor," said Charles Hall, Executive Director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Georgia farmers started complaining of a labor shortage soon after the state legislature passed its get-tough immigration bill. Minor, a vegetable grower, said immigrants who'd worked his fields for years were a no show this year. He claims even legal workers avoided Georgia, fearing they would be harassed by local law enforcement.

The Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association has commissioned agricultural economists at the University of Georgia to conduct a

survey of Georgia farmers. The goal is to get an exact figure on losses caused by the labor shortage. Executive Director Charles Hall said the losses could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Hall agrees that crops left in the field and farmers planting less could lead to slightly higher prices for Georgia produce.

"We don't want a situation where we've become dependent on foreign countries to supply our produce," said Hall. "We could become dependent on another country just like we depend on foreign oil for gas." A spokesman for Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black said Black is still looking for solutions to the labor shortage. Black will include the Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association survey in a larger study that will be presented to the state legislature in January.

Channel 11 report— Atlanta GA— July 12, 2011

Violent Mexican Drug Gang, Zetas, Taking Control of Migrant Smuggling cont.

Nearly a year ago, Zetas gunmen were implicated in the slaughter of 72 migrants at a ranch near San Fernando in Tamaulipas state, barely an hour and a half drive from Brownsville, Texas.

Other mass graves discovered in northern Mexico also may be the work of Los Zetas pushing to control smuggling to the United States.

Alejandro Solalinde, an activist Roman Catholic priest who runs a migrant shelter in the town of Ixtepec, in Mexico's Oaxaca state, said Los Zetas had been merciless with migrants.

"Los Zetas control the trafficking of persons," he said. "They are crueler and kill more easily. . . . They are voracious. They ask for more and more and more money."



Even with an apparent drop in the numbers of migrants moving through Mexico, people smuggling is a huge business.

A U.N. report last year titled "The Globalization of Crime" estimated that Mexican smugglers rake in \$6.6 billion annually from the 3 million Latin Americans who are taken across the southern U.S. border each year. Two weeks ago, Mexico's National Institute of Migration said that 6 out of 10 migrants paid traffickers to help them cross the U.S. border, while 43 percent used them to traverse Mexico as well.

While such estimates routinely are disputed, officials acknowledge that drug gangs have found a new revenue source in human trafficking. Mercedes Gomez Mont, the top immigration official in Chiapas state, which borders Guatemala, cited criminal investigations by the Mexican Attorney General's Office for her declaration that while "organized crime derives its greatest income from drug trafficking . . . in second place is human trafficking."

The ascendancy of Los Zetas in migrant smuggling, formerly the preserve of relatively small independent operators known as "coyotes" who smuggled groups of 20 or fewer migrants north, has transformed the business.

Mexican officials report regularly finding tractor-trailer trucks loaded with as many as 250 migrants in their holds. The heavily armed drivers, who travel with escort vehicles, make payoffs at police and immigration checkpoints.

Two such tractor-trailers were detained at a checkpoint May 17 near the Chiapas state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez. X-ray equipment revealed the ghostly outlines of human cargo, and when officials opened the holds they found 513 people from El Salvador, Ecuador, China, Japan, Guatemala, India, Nepal, Honduras and the Dominican Republic — a United Nations gathering of migrants.

Read more: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/08/11/2355095/violent-mexican-drug-gang-taking.html#ixzzIVnbCspW4>

Source— Miami Herald. August 12, 2011



The SOSY Agricultural Trends Newsletter supports Objective 1 of the SOSY Consortium Incentive Grant: Each year of the project, increase the number of OSY identified and recruited.

SOSY Partner States: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas **SOSY Partner Organizations:** National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFM), Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC), National PASS Center (NPC), National HEP/CAMP Associations