

# Taking On Our Workforce Challenges

## Quick Facts

- Agricultural production employed approximately 2.5 million people in 2022, with an additional 18+ million employed in agriculture-related jobs through the supply chain.
- According to the Department of Labor, upwards of 50–70% of domestic agriculture labor is unauthorized.
- Participation in the H-2A Visa Program for agricultural workers has increased by more than 300% in the last 17 years.
- According to the Partnership for a New American Economy, shortages in farm labor have resulted in higher food prices for consumers and as much as \$3 billion in missed GDP growth.

## Background

For years, the fresh produce industry and our allies have made an overwhelming case for the need to reform the laws governing our broken immigration system. It's up to Congress to build a legal and reliable workforce, especially since USDA now expects the U.S. to import more food than it exports.

Last year, Congress made considerable progress toward addressing farm worker issues with House passage of the Farm

Workforce Modernization Act and introduction of the Affordable and Secure Food Act. This year, Congress is considering similar legislative solutions.

Serious labor challenges also exist elsewhere in the supply chain, with the need for additional truck drivers, railroad workers, and the need to avert another crisis, like the 2022 union strikes.

## 2023 Workforce Priorities

Any legislation to reform the H-2A program should include:

- opening the program up to year-round industries,
  - allowing on-farm produce processing to utilize the program, and,
  - addressing the inequities in the current calculation of the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AWER).
  - Push for regulatory changes to the Department of Labor's H-2A program to better serve producers' needs.
  - Work with allies to reform and remove the cap on the H-2B visa program to meet the fresh produce industry's needs.
- Develop programs with stakeholder input that enhance and address building a labor supply to meet the needs of industries throughout the supply chain, including:
    - Capacity building for the transportation sector, mentorships and collaborations highlighting the fresh produce and floral industry, and,
    - Securing resources for curriculum development to encourage new entries to the fresh produce and floral industry supply chain.