

Dire Labor Shortage Demands Visa System Reform



Agriculture Workforce: Dire Labor Shortage Demands Visa System Reform

Agriculture suffers from a severe labor shortage that negatively effects all links in the food supply chain – particularly in the pork industry. Pig farm employment has declined since 2021, despite higher wages and competitive benefits. Although historically dependent on foreign born-workers, current visa requirements fail to meet pork industry workforce needs.

Strengthen the H-2A Visa Program to Allow for Year-Round Workers

The H-2A visa program, created by the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1987, allows a very limited number of foreign workers entry into the U.S. for seasonal agricultural work. The number of foreign workers currently permitted under the program does not come close to meeting the year-round workforce needs of livestock farmers. The lack of a fully robust workforce risks disrupting the pork supply and constraining production. Addressing workforce and labor concerns is critical for the communities where pig farms operate.

Domestic Labor Force Will Not Offset Pork Industry Labor Shortage

Iowa State University economists found that U.S. citizens and residents do not currently and will not in the future offset the need for foreign-born workers. One study found that shrinking rural populations, declining immigration to rural areas, and the rising median age of rural workers – combined with strong national labor market conditions – have contributed to the pork industry's labor shortage.

Facts That Matter:

Hog farm average wages increased more than **12%** from 2021 to 2022, even as the number of employees shrank.

8 in 10 of the top hog-producing states have unemployment rates below **4%**.

There is no slack in rural labor markets among top hog-producing states with average labor force participation at **80%** for those between 20 and 44 years old -- well above the national rate of **62.4%** for all age groups.

We invite you to learn more about policy issues to support and strengthen America's pork producers at [NPPC.org](https://www.nppc.org).

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