

Dire Labor Shortage Demands Visa System Reform



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. only for seasonal agricultural work. The workforce needs of the year-round pork industry cannot be met by the limited number of foreign workers available for seasonal jobs under this program. 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.

Protecting Access to Guest Worker Programs as Rural Populations Shrink

The pork industry has developed into a capital-intensive, technology-heavy, and science-driven industry in recent decades, which has caused a significant uptick in demand for hired, full-time skilled and unskilled workers. 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 study¹ found that shrinking and aging rural populations, declining immigration to rural areas, and strong national labor market conditions have exacerbated the pork industry's labor shortage.

Expanding access to the H-2A visa program is crucial for the future of the pork industry.

Facts That Matter:

Hog farm average wages increased more than 12% from 2021 to 2023, even as the number of employees shrank.

7 in 10 of the top hog-producing states have unemployment rates below the national unemployment rate of 4.1%.

There is no slack in rural labor markets among top hog-producing states. Census data shows a declining and aging rural labor force and average labor force participation at 80% for those between 20 and 44 years old.

¹ Boessen, Artz, and Schulz, *A Baseline Study of Labor Issues and Trends in U.S. Pork Production*, 2021

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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