

Migrant and Seasonal Workers in Michigan's Agriculture: A Study of their Contributions, Characteristics, Needs, and Services

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ABSTRACT

This study documents the current situation facing Michigan's migrant and seasonal farm workers, many of whom are Hispanics who come to Michigan each year for seasonal employment. The study provides an up-to-date analysis of the demand for, supply of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Michigan, and examines the needs of farm workers. Information for this study comes from secondary sources such as other reports and census data and from a statewide survey of service providers. The study found that Michigan agriculture has been employing migrant and seasonal workers in since the turn of the 20th century. There has been a functional and necessary relationship between migrant workers and producers of fruits and vegetables. Farm mechanization has reduced but not eliminated the demand and need for migrant and seasonal workers in Michigan, and migrants continue to follow a pattern of travelling long distances for employment, many traveling up to 4,000 miles roundtrip from Texas to work on Michigan farms. The study highlights that new policies and measures at the federal and state levels will shape the future of farm-labor relations, farm worker employment, and farm worker problems. The time was right for an up-to-date report on the demand for and supply of farm labor; and labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production will continue to be a growing and prosperous sector of Michigan agriculture.