

The Direct Economic Impact of Migrant Farmworkers on Southeastern Michigan

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the emerging community view of the farm labor problem by examining the economic impact of migrant seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) to the labor market on the rural areas of Branch, Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe and Washtenaw Counties in southeastern Michigan. It provides a model of farm labor as an economic development event to measure the economic impacts on rural areas from the presence of MSFWs. MSFW-dependent agriculture in southeastern Michigan is no longer just sugar-beet production; it is quite diverse and demands for MSFWs cut across a large variety of field operations. Thirty-nine of the forty-six labor-intensive crops grown in the state are grown in Michigan's southeastern region. Interest in foreign workers is growing and the H-2A program is slowly beginning to take hold in Michigan.