

WORKFORCE

AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture is committed to working with the federal government, private industry and academia to identify and address agricultural workforce challenges.



BACKGROUND

By 2026, nearly 25 percent of the U.S. workforce will be aged 55 and older (Bureau of Labor Statistics). The agricultural and food sectors are comprised of more than 21 million full and part-time jobs, and that number continues to rise annually (USDA Economic Research Service). This means that in less than nine years, more than 5.35 million jobs will be available and necessary in the agriculture and food sectors.

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COVID-19 has shown the importance of needing a stable workforce to minimize supply chain disruptions. Texas A&M International University released data from a [new economic study](#) highlighting the link between stabilizing the agricultural workforce and decreasing inflation and consumer prices. This study shows that ensuring farmers have a stable, secure, reliable and legal workforce is crucial to keeping America's grocery shelves stocked, combating inflation and lowering food prices for all domestic consumers.

Addressing workforce shortages facing farm employers and stabilizing the H-2A visa

application process is also crucial for enhancing our national food security by protecting domestic agriculture production. [According](#) to the USDA, for the first time in U.S. history, we as a country will be importing more agricultural goods than we export in 2023.

Rural America continues to see high outward migration of young adults because of real or perceived low wages and career limitations. With the expansion of rural broadband and greater connectivity, the marketability of rural America as a destination provides new opportunities for rural economic development. Congress and the administration must elevate existing rural development programs while creating new rural development programs that build upon the significant deployment of rural broadband.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

NASDA encourages Congress to introduce legislation that would make year-round H-2A visas available for the first time, an action that would be transformational for livestock operations that currently rely only on temporary labor.



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AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

NASDA'S ASKS

LABOR AND IMMIGRATION

As Congress considers immigration legislation, NASDA recommends the following criteria:

- Respect for and recognition of the importance of our current experienced workforce to the sustainability of U.S.-based agricultural production and food security.
- Create a mechanism for workers to earn legal status based on agricultural work experience.
- Ensure flexibility allowing guest workers to access and work in all types of agriculture, not just those occupations limited to seasonality.
- A market-based approach to wages
- Ability to meet expanding labor needs without arbitrary limits
- Amend the H-2A and H-2B programs to include year-round workers for all agricultural and forestry industries.



CONNECTIONS TO STEM CAREERS:

NASDA supports the expansion of school-based agricultural education curricula that aligns with the Agricultural, Food and Natural Resource content standards.

WORK BASED TRAINING & CERTIFICATIONS:

NASDA encourages the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to work with NASDA and the agriculture industry at large to expand work-based training, including apprenticeships and micro credentials that address skilled and unskilled labor shortages.

AGENCY COLLABORATION:

NASDA encourages the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Labor and Education to collaborate by creating standards, platforms and resources that address workforce needs.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

NASDA supports growth in community and youth development that encourages awareness and understanding of the agriculture, food and natural resources industries and their potential career opportunities. Organizations such as 4-H, the National FFA Organization, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) and Agriculture Future of America are recognized internationally and provide the U.S. with key strategic advantages relative to other countries in developing tomorrow's workforce.

REDEFINE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

To better understand the breadth, depth and scope of the agriculture, food and natural resource sectors through data analysis and to promote employment within the sector, NASDA seeks to redefine "agricultural employment" under the Fair Labor Standards Act and "agricultural labor" under the Internal Revenue Code. A new definition will better reflect agriculture as a mechanized and advancing industry while expanding its statistical impacts.

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