

# Taking On Our Workforce Challenges

## Quick Facts

- The average farmer is unable to hire more than 20% of their necessary labor, forcing them to plant less or leave crops to rot.
- According to the Department of Labor, upwards of 50–70% of domestic agriculture labor is unauthorized.
- Participation in the H-2A visa program for agricultural workers has increased by more than 300% in the last 17 years.
- Labor costs for fruit and vegetable growers average more than four times the labor costs than most of agriculture.

## Background

Our agricultural workforce crisis has reached a critical point, with labor shortages and costs to farmers far exceeding the value of their crops. Despite warning signs for years, Congress has failed to pass a single piece of legislation to modernize the H-2A program which is quickly becoming the only source of reliable labor for farmers in the United States.

IFPA is leading the charge for reform of the H-2A visa program through executive deregulation and legislative reforms that will make the program more affordable and accessible for all IFPA growers seeking to use the program.

## Workforce Reform in 2025

- Freeze and cap the H-2A program's Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). We support a complete overhaul of the H-2A wage system, but Congress must act immediately to stop this out-of-control feature of the program regardless of the success of broader reforms.
  - Pass the Supporting Farm Operations Act (H.R. 1624), introduced by Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI). This bipartisan bill provides urgent relief by freezing the AEWR for two years—offering farmers the affordability and predictability they desperately need.
- Expand the H-2A program to meet the needs of all producers, regardless of the seasonality of their production.
- Overturn the Department of Labor's Worker Protections Rule (April 2024) and Disaggregation Rule (Feb 2023).
- Remove the cap on the H-2B visa program to meet the fresh produce industry's needs.
- Develop programs with stakeholder input that enhance and address building a labor supply to meet the needs of industries throughout the supply chain, including:
  - Capacity building for the transportation sector, mentorships and collaborations highlighting the fresh produce and floral industry, and,
  - Securing resources for curriculum development to encourage new entries to the fresh produce and floral industry supply chain.

