USDA Awards $50 Million to Support Farmworkers and Agricultural Employers

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PALISADE, Colo., June 14, 2024 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is awarding $50 million to 141 awardees in 40 states and Puerto Rico, through the Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program (FLSP Program), reaching 177 unique agricultural operations and over 11,000 workers. The awards will help improve the resiliency of the U.S. food supply chain by addressing agriculture labor challenges and instability, strengthen protections for farmworkers, and expand legal pathways for labor migration. This program delivers on a commitment made as part of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and furthers the Administration's commitment to a regional approach to migration in the hemisphere.

"These awards will largely support small and mid-sized farms to ensure they can hire and retain the workers they need to be competitive in the market, while also lifting up rural communities across the country," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Farmworkers make an incredibly important contribution to food and agriculture and ensure we have food on our tables every day. Improving working conditions and quality of life for farmworkers, both U.S. based workers and those that come to our country to work, is one key step in building a stronger, more resilient food supply chain. The Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program demonstrates the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to supporting employers and farmworkers alike."

USDA announced the FLSP Program in September 2023, in coordination with other federal agencies, to help address workforce needs in agriculture; promote a safe and healthy work environment, as well as ethical recruitment for farmworkers; and support lawful migration pathways for workers, including expansion of labor pathways for workers from Northern Central America, through the H-2A visa program. FLSP was designed with significant input from immigration, labor, and agricultural stakeholders - informed by the experiences of farmworkers and farmers themselves.

The FLSP Program grants will support a range of required and elective supplemental commitments to expand benefits and protections for all employees. Examples of awardee commitments include:

- Establishing robust pay-related benefits that have the potential to raise earnings for thousands of workers, as well as provide them more time with their families or taking care of their health through policies such as personal and paid sick time off, and mid-season vacation leave;

- Markedly improving working and living conditions by strengthening employer-employee engagement, such as establishing Collaborative Working Groups with robust farmworker representation and partnerships with external organizations that have longstanding experience collaborating with farmworkers;
- Providing additional worker-friendly benefits, such as advancement and management training opportunities, driver's license training, no-cost English classes for employees, and additional recreation spaces in housing facilities;
- Supporting Know-Your-Rights-and-Resources training sessions for all workers to ensure they understand their legal rights as workers in the United States;
- Participation in Worker-driven Social Responsibility programs - a proven model for improving workplace environments - such as the Fair Food Program;
- Disclosing recruitment practices and advancing ethical, safe recruitment practices that are essential to protecting workers from illegal fees, undue debt, exploitation, and even human trafficking;
- 60 percent of employer awardees that plan to utilize the H-2A visa program committed to recruiting workers from Northern Central America.

View the complete list of awardees.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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