



## USDA Seeks Input on New Grant Program to Strengthen Food Supply Chain, Reduce Irregular Migration and Improve Working Conditions for Farmworkers

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California

*FSA will hold three virtual listening sessions September 28 and 29*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is gathering input to help shape a recently announced planned grant program focused on improving the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain by addressing labor shortages in agriculture, reducing irregular migration through increased use of legal pathways, and improving labor protections for farmworkers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold three virtual listening sessions on Sept. 28-29 for the new farm labor stabilization and protection pilot grant program, which the Biden-Harris administration announced earlier this year as part of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.

The grant program will use up to \$65 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to provide support for agricultural employers in implementing robust labor standards to promote a safe, healthy work environment for both U.S. workers and workers hired from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.

### **More on the Grant Program**

The program will aim to improve the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain and advance several major Administration priorities:

- *Driving U.S. economic recovery and safeguarding domestic food security by addressing current labor shortages in agriculture.* Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, agricultural employers were struggling to secure a stable workforce. The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, threatening our domestic capacity to produce a safe and robust food supply. This pilot program will help address this shortage by expanding the potential pool of workers.
- *Reducing irregular migration through the increased use of legal pathways.* The Biden-Harris administration has taken numerous steps to address the elevated levels of irregular migration from Northern Central America. The H-2A visa program offers a lawful pathway for individuals from these countries to come to the United States to engage in temporary or seasonal agricultural work. An effective H-2A visa program is critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. This pilot program will aim to address challenges that both workers and employers face in utilizing the program.

- *Improving working conditions for farmworkers.* Strong and safe working conditions are critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. Through this pilot program, USDA will support efforts to improve working conditions for both U.S. and H-2A workers and ensure that H-2A workers are not subjected to unfair recruitment practices.

## **Agricultural Employer Organizations**

FSA will hold a listening session for agricultural employer organizations on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 11 a.m. ET. FSA seeks input on:

- Challenges that employers face in securing a stable workforce.
- The set of incentives employers seek from USDA in order to improve their ability to hire workers from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.
- The labor standards that will make meaningful progress towards ensuring a safer and fairer working environment for both domestic and H-2A farmworkers.

## **Labor Unions and Farmworker Advocacy Community**

FSA will hold a listening session for labor unions on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 2 p.m. ET, and one for the broader farmworker advocacy community on Thursday, Sept. 29 at 2 p.m. ET. From both groups, FSA seeks input on:

- Barriers or challenges faced by farmworkers, specifically those from northern Central American countries participating in the H-2A visa program.
- Recommendations to enhance farmworker protections and to increase farmworker awareness of resources and worker rights.

## **How to Attend**

Register online at [fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers](https://fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers). FSA will also consider comments received by 30 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register. Find more details in the [Sept. 21 notice on the Federal Register](#) or on [fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers](https://fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers).

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