



November 30, 2016

Vice President-Elect Mike Pence  
Chairman  
Trump-Pence Transition Executive Committee  
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Vice President-Elect Pence:

Farming in America is a growth industry and a world-class example of what we do very well in this country. The many agricultural products we produce, harvest and process comprise one of the few sectors of our economy in which the U.S. has a trade surplus with the rest of the world. But that growth cannot be taken for granted. The economic health of food producers, and the rural communities in which they live, is threatened by the lack of a reliable workforce. Simply put, farm employers cannot grow and create jobs, unless they know they will have workers, today and tomorrow, to help with the harvest, to help care for livestock, and to help feed the world.

The Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC) serves as the unified voice of agriculture in the effort to ensure that America's farmers, ranchers and growers have access to a legal and stable workforce. On behalf of the over 70 united organizations representing the diverse needs of agricultural employers across the country, the undersigned executives of the AWC steering committee appreciate the opportunity to engage with the new Trump Administration and look forward to working together to address the agricultural labor crisis.

Presently, too many of our nation's farmers face a daily reality scrambling to identify available and qualified workers. Those fortunate to have a workforce are concerned that a policy of immigration enforcement alone without an alternative labor solution will decimate their workforce. Here are examples of this dynamic:

- A 2012 survey by the California Farm Bureau found that 71% of tree fruit growers, and nearly 80% of raisin and berry growers, were unable to find an adequate number of employees to prune trees or vines or pick the crop.
- According to a 2015 analysis by the Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform, the lack of available labor to match the demand for fresh fruits and vegetables with expanded production costs the US economy \$3.1 billion a year.
- In the dairy sector, a separate Texas A&M study in 2012 found that farms using immigrant labor supply more than 60% of the milk in the country. A complete loss of immigrant labor in dairy farming could cut U.S. economic output by \$32 billion, resulting in 208,000 fewer jobs nationwide. 77,000 of the lost jobs would be on dairy farms, but most of the losses would be other jobs related to dairy farming.



While farmers follow the letter of the law to ensure workers are legal, estimates still show that the number of agricultural workers without valid documents ranges from 50% to as high as 75%. Given the reluctance of workers to respond to surveys on their legal status it could be even higher. The consequences of losing workers who are not legally documented would be devastating to rural America, even beyond those specific farmers losing workers. American agriculture is responsible for millions of jobs not only on American farms and ranches but each of those jobs create two to three full-time jobs further down the value chain in the food processing, transportation, farm equipment, marketing, retail and other sectors.

The only current means of addressing domestic labor shortages in agriculture is the H-2A temporary and seasonal foreign agricultural workforce program, but it provides only about 10 percent of our labor needs. It is an excessively bureaucratic program with statutory and regulatory restrictions that render it unavailable to many segments of the industry in its current form. While specific regulatory reforms may provide short-term relief to H-2A users, the program cannot serve as the only mechanism to ensure a legal and stable workforce for the entire agricultural industry.

In recent years, the farm sector has come together to create a legislative framework that provides actionable solutions for agriculture's needs. The solution includes a national program to ensure an adequate, productive and competitive farm workforce – every day of the year, not just seasonally – in the future. This framework is a market-based, flexible program that works for all of agriculture. The solution also allows undocumented workers who have significant gainful employment history in agriculture to earn legal status. Both components are integral to a larger solution to the ongoing immigration policy challenge.

We understand the imperative to secure our borders and protect the security concerns of this nation. We support addressing those security concerns as long as these goals are implemented in conjunction with policies and legislation that address the challenges of production agriculture. Frankly, taking an enforcement-only immigration approach will have a devastating impact on agriculture. An American Farm Bureau Federation commissioned study found that type of approach, including border security, increased interior enforcement, and electronic verification, caused production to fall by \$30-60 billion dollars and food prices to increase by 5-6 percent. From the standpoint of agriculture, the best means to provide security is to provide certainty; we must create legal avenues for sufficient numbers of agricultural workers to enter the country when they are needed and leave the country when they are not and to make sure that current undocumented workers come out of the shadows. This will allow federal and state governments to focus resources on removing bad actors from the U.S., and prevent the migration of others who are not coming here for legitimate work opportunities.

The members of the Agriculture Workforce Coalition are eager to review how our ideas can complement the goals of the new Trump Administration, and others in Congress who share the goal of reforming our immigration policies and providing greater certainty in the area of labor.



Sincerely,

Zippy Duvall, President  
American Farm Bureau Federation

Ken Fisher, President & CEO  
AmericanHort

Mike Stuart, President  
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association

Frank A. Gasperini Jr., Executive Vice President  
National Council of Agricultural Employers

Chuck Conner, President & CEO  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

Roger Johnson, President  
National Farmers Union

James Mulhern, President & CEO  
National Milk Producers Federation

Chalmers R. Carr III, President  
USA Farmers

Jim Bair, President & CEO  
U.S. Apple Association

Thomas E. Stenzel, President & CEO  
United Fresh Produce Association

Tom Nassif, President & CEO  
Western Growers Association

Anja Raudabaugh, CEO  
Western United Dairymen