



Agriculture Industry Labor Survey June 2011

1. Which sector of the agriculture industry do you represent?

132 responses to the survey. Urban agriculture (landscape, turf grass and nursery), Agriculture processors (cotton and peanuts), Farmers (fruit/vegetable, row crops, and livestock), and Farm service (chemical, fertilizer, honeybees, irrigation, etc.) comprised the vast majority of the ag sectors in this survey.

2. Are you experiencing a labor shortage at this time?

46% are experiencing a labor shortage at this time.

Of those answering in the affirmative when asked about experiencing a labor shortage,

*23.9 % said that fewer workers are applying for the job(s) available.

*8.7% said that local law enforcement has increased enforcement action towards immigrants.

*30.4% said that the physical demand of the job is too difficult for those who seem interested.

*36.9% said that immigrants are concerned with Georgia's new immigration reform law.

30% of those surveyed are worried they will not have the workers they need in the future.

24% surveyed have the workers needed for this year.

SURVEY COMMENTS:

- a. Many Hispanics are telling us they will leave the state prior to July 1. Some have left already.*
- b. Georgia residents do not want to do the hard physical labor required in my business.*
- c. Employees quit last week to move to Florida because of the new law.*
- d. I tried to hire more workers, but they lived too far from the work area. Tried out a new worker, but he didn't last past 2:00 p.m.*
- e. Today I needed 20 pickers and got 10.*

3 & 4. How many workers did you utilize in 2010 & how many do you need in 2011?

Agricultural employers have similar hiring needs in 2011 as they did in 2010.

5. Have you utilized federal guest worker programs?

8% have utilized a federal guest worker program. 5% used H-2A and 3% utilized H-2B.

SURVEY COMMENTS:

- a. *H-2A cost is way too much for small producers or u-pick operations.*
- b. *Paperwork is ridiculous, costs are high and process is too long. I use an agency who specializes in H-2A work visas and their charge has to be paid months in advance. If workers are not approved, that money is lost (not refundable). Paperwork has to be in months before workers are needed. If workers are turned down, it is only days before you need the workers on the farm and there is not time to recruit more. Farm crops don't wait for paperwork to be done. With Georgia's new immigration law, workers are intimidated and reluctant to come to Georgia even though we are going through the proper channels.*
- c. *Could not get workers in 2010 because of the visa cap and delays from Georgia Department of Labor. I did not apply for 2011 visas due to reduced income. I WILL be applying for visas again for 2012!*
- d. *I cannot afford the program.*

6. What types of labor are offered through your business?

Jobs available run the gamut. Incredible diversity of job opportunities in agriculture. This survey reveals the shortages are not in just a handful of job descriptions.

7. What is the wage range for these jobs?

Wage ranges from \$7.25/hr - \$20.00/hr. Average wage range is \$12 to \$14.

8. Do you utilize an outside private business to help locate and process employees?

88% of respondents locate their own workforce. Others utilize outside contractors or labor services.

SURVEY COMMENT: I have tried the State Employment Service and a private employment service, but neither generated dependable workers.

9. Please provide any additional comments you believe would be helpful in assessing the labor situation.

- a. Local people show no interest in the types of jobs that we need filled and the few who do apply last only a couple days before quitting or possess the work ethic to make it through the season.*
- b. Agriculture desperately needs a workable labor solution--perhaps a user-friendly guest worker program.*
- c. I do understand the need for reform, but this sudden aggressive approach has many far reaching repercussions. Not only to my workforce, but to the local economy.*
- d. I know some of this problem lies more with the federal government, but with the new laws, even my legal Hispanic workers don't want to stay in our state for fear of being harassed! During exit interviews they stated that they were moving to South Carolina or North Carolina.*
- e. The labor pool has dried up because Hispanic are leaving Georgia as fast as they can. They are terrified about what will happen when this law goes into effect. Since we cannot find immigrant labor, we are trying to hire non-immigrant labor. Even with pay rates above \$10 an hour, we cannot find people interested in working outdoors, in the heat. They will stay for one or two days and then leave. Our work is labor intensive, so we are losing money every day by not having dependable, hard-working laborers. This is just another blow to our business on top of what we have already lost due to the economy.*
- f. I have a 9-year employee moving to Texas in 3 weeks because he is afraid that HB87 will affect his family. His wife is not documented, and they are fearful of increased profiling. My company is losing its most valuable install foreman as a direct result of this bill.*
- g. We sell to farmers that cannot hire enough part time labor for harvest which directly affects them and, in turn, affects our business with them.*

10. For our reference, please provide the Georgia county where your business is primarily conducted.

More than 61 counties were listed in all regions of the state, including urban and rural areas.