



## FARMWORKERS IN NORTH AMERICA FACT SHEET

### **Agricultural work is dangerous:**

- The world's approximate one billion agricultural workers face some of the most hazardous working conditions for the lowest pay. Globally, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has identified farm work as one of the top three most dangerous jobs, with millions of workers injured each year and thousands killed in the fields.
- Globally, an estimated 1 million people are victims of pesticide poisoning annually; 300,000 of those incidents are fatal. Agricultural workers represent a large proportion of pesticide poisonings.
- Annually, as many as 20,000 farmworkers in the United States are victims of acute pesticide poisoning; in addition pesticide exposure leads to higher rates of birth defects, developmental delays, leukemia, and brain cancer among farmworker children.

### **Agricultural work does not offer employment stability:**

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are labor-intensive crops, often requiring hired labor to harvest, even on small farms, but produce is seasonal and does not afford most farmworkers year-round employment.
- Farmworkers often must migrate, both within their home country, and across borders, to find work or follow the harvest seasons. For example, farmworkers may spend the winter months in Florida, when harvest is at its peak there, and migrate up the east coast of the U.S. in the warmer months.
- Imports of produce from Mexico have grown significantly since NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) went into effect. For example, imports of fresh fruit from Mexico are increasing approximately 20% annually. Mexico supplies the United States with over 2/3 of our fresh vegetable and over 1/3 of our fresh fruit imports, much of it grown by farmworkers who have migrated within Mexico to burgeoning agricultural areas.

### **Agriculture work is underpaid:**

- In the spring of 2015, farmworkers in Baja, Mexico compromised on a deal granting them a minimum daily wage of \$9.50-\$11.50/day. While this wage represents an increase, it remains well below the cost of living and the agreement does not address many of the hazards of the job, including exposure to toxic pesticides.
- Poor conditions and extremely low pay in Mexico spur agricultural workers to migrate to the United States looking for better opportunities. Unfortunately, opportunities for the estimated 2 million farmworkers in the U.S. are not good either.
- For some categories of agriculture worker in the U.S., average pay is less than \$10/hour.
- Agricultural workers in the United States are exempt from basic minimum wage laws and other employment rules that protect other workers.

**Fair World Project advocates for justice for farmworkers. Learn more**  
<http://fairworldproject.org/campaigns/farmworker-justice/>