

FLORIDA

Farm Labor

February 22, 2006

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The number of workers paid by farmers and agricultural services totaled 58,000 for the week of January 8 through 14. Farmers hired 49,000 in January 2006 compared with 42,000 in October 2005. Agricultural services provided 9,000 paid workers, up 6,000 from last quarter and 1,000 more than those supplied a year ago.

Despite frosty temperatures in some central Peninsula areas, field activities remained on schedule during the survey week. Citrus growers continued to irrigate in drier areas, fertilizing, applying herbicides and repairing broken irrigation systems. Small sizes and shortage of labor had an effect on the number of boxes picked. Recent cool temperatures slowed vegetable crop development. Producers marketed snap beans, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes. Sugarcane harvesting remained active around Lake Okeechobee.

The January all hired worker average wage rate was \$9.49 per hour, 3 cents less than the \$9.52 paid last year and 14 cents more than last quarter. Farmers paid an average of \$9.55 per hour, 22 cents higher than the \$9.33 paid in October 2005 and 3 cents above the \$9.52 paid in January 2005. Agricultural services paid workers an average of \$9.20 per hour, 45 cents lower than the \$9.65 paid last quarter and 30 cents below the \$9.50 paid a year ago.

UNITED STATES

There were 796,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of January 8-14, 2006, up 3 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 616,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 180,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$10.11 per hour during the January 2006 reference week, up 33 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$9.15 per hour, up 44 cents from last January, while livestock workers earned \$9.25 per hour compared with \$9.20 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$9.19 per hour, was up 29 cents from last year.

The number of hours worked averaged 38.2 hours for hired workers during the survey week, up 3 percent from a year ago.

The largest increases in the number of hired farm workers from last year occurred in the Pacific (Oregon and Washington), Corn Belt I (Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio), Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), and Northeast II (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) regions. Despite very wet weather in the Pacific region, continued expansion in the nursery and greenhouse industries increased the demand for hired workers. In the Corn Belt I region, warm temperatures and midweek rains caused extremely muddy conditions in feedlots, corrals, and pastures, stressing livestock and increasing the need for hired workers. Unseasonably warm, dry weather in the Delta region allowed field and farm activities to progress rapidly. Also, many producers were still cleaning up the damage from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Therefore, more hired workers were needed. In the Northeast II region, above normal temperatures allowed some preparations for spring planting to begin, heightening the demand for hired workers.

The largest decreases in the number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in California and in the Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas), Northern Plains (Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota), and Appalachian II (Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia) regions. In California, heavy rains and flooding for two weeks prior to the reference week limited field activity in central and northern areas. Also, tight security at the Mexican border and strong competition from the higher paying construction industry continued to cause farm worker shortages. Thus, fewer workers were hired during the reference week. Extremely dry conditions in the Southern Plains region caused many livestock producers to liquidate their herds, lessening the demand for hired workers. In the Appalachian II and Northern Plains regions, the unseasonably warm weather decreased the need for supplemental feeding. Therefore, fewer livestock workers were needed.

Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Corn Belt I, Southeast (Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina), Northeast II and Corn Belt II (Iowa and Missouri) regions. In the Corn Belt I and II regions, the warm weather led to considerable movement of grain to market, heightening the demand for highly paid truck drivers and machine operators. The higher wages in the Southeast region were due to the increased demand for highly skilled machine operators and truck drivers on livestock and poultry operations and a larger percentage of nursery and greenhouse workers in the work force. The higher wages in the Northeast II region were due to a higher than normal percentage of nursery and greenhouse workers.

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TABLE 1 -- Florida agricultural workers, number of workers, wage rates, and hours worked, January 8 – 14, 2006, with comparisons

Employer, Year, and survey week	Hired Workers							
	Number of workers			Hours Worked Per Week	Wages Paid by Type of Work			
	All	Expected to work			All	Field	Livestock	
150 days or more		149 days or less						
HIRED BY FARMERS								
2006		<i>Thousands</i>		<i>Hours</i>	<i>Dollars Per Hour^{1/}</i>			
2006	January 8 – 14	49.0	38.0	11.0	39.2	9.55	8.80	8.80
2005	October 9 - 15	42.0	37.0	5.0	39.4	9.33	8.60	8.45
	July 10 - 16	41.0	39.0	2.0	41.3	9.70	8.75	9.15
	April 10 - 16	49.0	41.0	8.0	38.7	9.31	8.20	9.90
	January 9 - 15	48.0	37.0	11.0	38.7	9.52	8.50	8.60
2004	October 9 - 15	52.0	44.0	8.0	39.4	9.14	7.95	9.10
	July 11 - 17	39.0	33.0	6.0	39.2	9.63	8.70	9.10
	April 11 - 17	57.0	53.0	4.0	38.3	8.79	7.85	8.60
	January 11-17	61.0	54.0	7.0	41.7	8.85	7.70	8.60
HIRED BY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2006	January 8 - 14	9.0			40.0	9.20		
2005	October 9 - 15	3.0			41.0	9.65		
	July 10 - 16	2.0			45.0	9.90		
	April 10 - 16	10.0			39.0	9.10		
	January 9 - 15	8.0			40.0	9.50		
2004	October 9 - 15	3.0			40.0	10.20		
	July 11 - 17	3.0			45.0	9.70		
	April 11 - 17	9.0			38.0	9.25		
	January 11-17	14.0			38.5	9.25		
HIRED BY BOTH FARMERS & AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2006	January 8 - 14	58.0				9.49		
2005	October 9 - 15	45.0				9.35		
	July 10 - 16	43.0				9.71		
	April 10 - 16	59.0				9.27		
	January 9 - 15	56.0				9.52		
2004	October 10 - 16	55.0				9.20		
	July 11 - 17	42.0				9.64		
	April 11 - 17	66.0				8.85		
	January 11-17	75.0				8.92		

^{1/} Benefits, such as housing and meals, are provided some workers but the values are not included in the wage rates.

TABLE 2 -- Number of workers hired by farmers, wage rates, and hours worked, Selected States, January 8 – 14, 2006, with comparisons ^{1/}

Item	Florida	California	Texas & Oklahoma	Arizona & New Mexico	Hawaii	United States ^{2/}
<i>Thousands</i>						
ALL HIRED WORKERS						
January 8 – 14, 2006	49	127	43	21	7	616
October 9 – 15, 2005	42	*183	64	25	7	*842
January 9 – 15, 2005	48	143	50	19	7	589
EXPECTED TO WORK						
150 days or more						
January 8 – 14, 2006	38	104	37	16	6	513
October 9 – 15, 2005	37	*146	51	20	6	*621
January 9 – 15, 2005	37	119	41	17	6	494
149 days or less						
January 8 – 14, 2006	11	23	6	5	1	103
October 9 – 15, 2005	5	*37	13	5	1	*221
January 9 – 15, 2005	11	24	9	2	1	95
<i>Dollars per hour ^{3/}</i>						
ALL HIRED WORKER WAGE RATE						
January 8 – 14, 2006	9.55	10.36	8.89	9.35	11.95	10.11
October 9 – 15, 2005	9.33	*10.13	8.38	8.28	11.73	9.61
January 9 – 15, 2005	9.52	9.82	9.56	8.61	11.52	9.78
WAGES BY TYPE OF WORKER						
Field & Livestock						
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	9.29	8.17	8.40	10.27	9.19
October 9 – 15, 2005	8.58	*9.37	7.68	7.67	10.18	8.96
January 9 – 15, 2005	8.51	8.86	8.75	8.02	9.98	8.90
Field						
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	9.12	7.53	8.02	10.14	9.15
October 9 – 15, 2005	8.60	9.21	7.60	7.27	10.10	8.90
January 9 – 15, 2005	8.50	8.56	8.01	7.70	9.94	8.71
Livestock						
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	10.25	8.74	9.12	^{4/}	9.25
October 9 – 15, 2005	8.45	*10.45	7.84	8.87	^{4/}	*9.15
January 9 – 15, 2005	8.60	9.93	9.35	8.41	^{4/}	9.20
<i>Average hours per week</i>						
HOURS WORKED BY ALL HIRED WORKERS						
January 8 – 14, 2006	39.2	41.5	39.2	46.9	37.5	38.2
October 9 – 15, 2005	39.4	44.7	39.1	44.8	39.7	42.0
January 9 – 15, 2005	38.7	*44.4	37.0	45.2	36.3	37.0

^{1/} Excludes Agricultural Service workers.

^{2/} United States exclude Alaska.

^{3/} Value of any perquisites provided are not included in wage rates.

^{4/} Insufficient data for livestock..

* Revised.

RELIABILITY OF FARM LABOR ESTIMATES

SURVEY PROCEDURES: These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) during the last two weeks of January using sampling procedures to ensure every employer of agricultural workers had a chance of being selected.

Two samples of farm operators are selected. First, NASS maintains a list of farms that hire farm workers. Farms on this list are classified by size and type. Those expected to employ large numbers of workers are selected with greater frequency than those hiring few or no workers. A second sample consists of segments of land scientifically selected from an area sampling frame. Each June, highly trained interviewers locate each selected land segment and identify every farm operating land within the sample segment's boundaries. The names of farms found in these area segments are matched against the NASS list of farms; those not found on the list are included in the labor survey sample to represent all farms. This methodology is known as multiple frame sampling, with an area sample used to measure the incompleteness of the list. Additionally, a list of agricultural service firms was sampled in California and Florida. The survey reference week was January 8-14, 2006.

RELIABILITY: Two types of errors, sampling and non-sampling, are always present in an estimate based on a sample survey. Both types affect the "accuracy" of the estimates.

Sampling error occurs because a complete census is not taken. The sampling error measures the variation in estimates from the average of all possible samples. An estimate of 100 with a sampling error of 1 would mean that chances are 19 out of 20 that the estimates from all possible samples averaged together would be between 98 and 102; which is the survey estimate, plus or minus two times the sampling error. The sampling error expressed as a percent of the estimate is called the relative sampling error. The relative sampling error for number of hired workers at the U.S. level is normally less than 5 percent. The relative sampling error for the number of hired workers generally ranged between 11 and 27 percent at the regional level. The U.S. all hired farm worker wage rate had a relative sampling error of 1.4 percent. The relative sampling error was 1.5 percent for the combined field and livestock worker wage rate. Relative sampling errors for the all hired farm worker wage rate generally ranged between 3 and 12 percent at the regional levels. Relative sampling errors for wage rates published by type of farm and economic class of farm generally ranged between 3 and 30 percent at the regional level.

Non-sampling errors can occur in a complete census as well as in sample surveys. They are caused by the inability to obtain correct information from each operation sampled, differences in interpreting questions or definitions, and mistakes in editing, coding or processing the data. Special efforts are taken at each step of the survey to minimize non-sampling errors.

REVISION POLICY: Farm labor information is subject to revision the next time the information is published or the year after the original publication date. The basis for revision must be supported by additional data that directly affect the level of the estimate. Worker numbers and wage rates for January 2005 and October 2005 were subject to revision with this report. If any revisions were made to previous data, they are reprinted in this report for your information, and they are identified as such.