

# FLORIDA Farm Labor

May 23, 2006

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The number of workers paid by farmers and agricultural services totaled 60,000 for the week of April 9 through 15. Farmers hired 52,000 workers in April 2006, 3,000 more than in January 2006 and in April 2005. Agricultural services provided 8,000 paid workers, down 1,000 from last quarter and 2,000 more than those supplied a year ago.

Dry weather persisted over most of the State during the survey week. Dry, hard soils prevented most producers from preparing fields and planting peanuts and cotton. Vegetable harvesting slowed slightly as producers observed the spring holiday. The dry weather lowered the incidence of disease, especially in some northern and Panhandle fields. Producers marketed snap beans, blueberries, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes. Grove work included a limited amount of hedging with some caretakers discing, chopping and mowing cover crops.

The April combined farmer and agricultural service all hired worker wage rate average \$9.24 per hour, 3 cents less than the \$9.27 paid last year and 25 cents less than last quarter's \$9.49. Farmers paid an average of \$9.19 per hour, 36 cents lower than the \$9.55 paid in January 2006 and 12 cents below the \$9.31 paid in April 2005. Agricultural services paid workers an average of \$9.60 per hour, 40 cents higher than the \$9.20 paid last quarter and 50 cents above the \$9.10 paid a year ago.

## UNITED STATES

Hired Workers Down 4 Percent, Wage Rates Up 5 Percent From a Year Ago

There were 956,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of April 9-15, 2006, down 4 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 718,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 238,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$9.79 per hour during the April 2006 reference week, up 44 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$8.96 per hour, up 40 cents from last April, while livestock workers earned \$9.30 per hour compared with \$9.14 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$9.07 per hour, was up 35 cents from last year. The number of hours worked averaged 40.8 hours for hired workers during the survey week, up 2 percent from a year ago. The largest decreases in the number of hired farm workers from last year occurred in California and in the Southeast (Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina) and Appalachian II (Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia) regions. In California, eight consecutive weeks of rain and unseasonably cool weather caused major delays in fieldwork across the northern two-thirds of the State. These factors, along with the ongoing worker shortages due to the continued tight security at the Mexican border and the controversy over immigration, have combined to keep the number of hired workers much lower than last year. Persistent dryness over the southeast region has kept soil moisture levels inadequate for field preparation and planting, reducing the need for field workers. Pasture growth in the region has been severely curtailed by the lack of rain, delaying movement of cattle to grazing and decreasing the demand for livestock workers. In the Appalachian II region, late thunderstorms just prior to the reference week left soils too wet to work and caused delays in field activity. Therefore, fewer hired workers were needed.

The largest increases in the number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in the Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), Appalachian I (North Carolina and Virginia), and Corn Belt I (Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) regions, and in Florida. In the Delta region, a return to more normal weather patterns compared to last year's cool, wet reference week caused hired worker numbers to be higher. Continued dry conditions in the Appalachian I region kept pastures from greening up, necessitating more supplemental feeding and heightening the demand for livestock workers. In the Corn Belt I region, cold, damp weather just prior to the reference week had put many field activities on hold. Considerably warmer, drier conditions during the reference week allowed fieldwork to gain momentum, increasing the need for hired workers. Strong demand from the nursery and greenhouse industries in Florida caused more field workers to be required.

Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Northeast II (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), Northeast I (New England and New York), Corn Belt I and Mountain I (Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming) regions. In the Northeast I and II regions, the higher wages were due to a larger than normal percentage of nursery and greenhouse workers in



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**TABLE 1 -- Florida agricultural workers, number of workers, wage rates, and hours worked, April 9 – 15, 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						
<b>HIRED BY FARMERS</b>								
<b>2006</b>		<i>Thousands</i>		<i>Hours</i>	<i>Dollars Per Hour<sup>1/</sup></i>			
April 9 - 15	<b>52.0</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>9.19</b>	<b>8.37</b>	<b>8.50</b>	
January 8 - 14	<b>49.0</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>39.2</b>	<b>9.55</b>	<b>8.80</b>	<b>8.80</b>	
<b>2005</b>								
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	<b>49.0</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>9.31</b>	<b>8.20</b>	<b>9.90</b>	
January 9 - 15	48.0	37.0	11.0	38.7	9.52	8.50	8.60	
<b>2004</b>								
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	
<b>HIRED BY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES</b>								
<b>2006</b>								
April 9 - 15	<b>8.0</b>			<b>40.0</b>	<b>9.60</b>			
January 8 - 14	<b>9.0</b>			<b>40.0</b>	<b>9.20</b>			
<b>2005</b>								
October 9 - 15	3.0			41.0	9.65			
July 10 - 16	2.0			45.0	9.90			
April 10 - 16	<b>10.0</b>			<b>39.0</b>	<b>9.10</b>			
January 9 - 15	8.0			40.0	9.50			
<b>2004</b>								
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			
<b>HIRED BY BOTH FARMERS &amp; AGRICULTURAL SERVICES</b>								
<b>2006</b>								
April 9 - 15	<b>60.0</b>				<b>9.24</b>			
January 8 - 14	<b>58.0</b>				<b>9.49</b>			
<b>2005</b>								
October 9 - 15	45.0				9.35			
July 10 - 16	43.0				9.71			
April 10 - 16	<b>59.0</b>				<b>9.27</b>			
January 9 - 15	56.0				9.52			
<b>2004</b>								
October 10 - 16	55.0				9.20			
July 11 - 17	42.0				9.64			
April 11 - 17	66.0				8.85			

<sup>1/</sup> 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, April 9 – 15, 2006, with comparisons <sup>1/</sup>**

Item	Florida	California	Texas & Oklahoma	Arizona & New Mexico	Hawaii	United States <sup>2/</sup>
<i>Thousands</i>						
<b>ALL HIRED WORKERS</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	52	137	55	17	7	718
January 8 – 14, 2006	49	*125	43	21	7	*614
April 10 – 16, 2005	49	182	55	18	7	753
<b>EXPECTED TO WORK</b>						
<b>150 days or more</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	44	117	42	16	6	580
January 8 – 14, 2006	38	*103	37	16	6	*512
April 10 – 16, 2005	41	147	47	17	6	600
<b>149 days or less</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	8	20	13	1	1	138
January 8 – 14, 2006	11	*22	6	5	1	*102
April 10 – 16, 2005	8	35	8	1	1	153
<i>Dollars per hour <sup>3/</sup></i>						
<b>ALL HIRED WORKER WAGE RATE</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	9.19	10.19	9.37	9.17	11.96	9.79
January 8 – 14, 2006	9.55	*10.30	8.89	9.35	11.95	*10.10
April 10 – 16, 2005	9.31	9.48	9.28	9.18	11.33	9.35
<b>WAGES BY TYPE OF WORKER</b>						
<b>Field &amp; Livestock</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	8.39	9.22	8.64	8.60	9.93	9.07
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	*9.20	8.17	8.40	10.27	*9.17
April 10 – 16, 2005	8.37	8.76	8.53	8.51	9.79	8.72
<b>Field</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	8.37	8.95	8.24	8.14	9.79	8.96
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	*8.99	7.53	8.02	10.14	*9.11
April 10 – 16, 2005	8.20	8.62	8.13	7.95	9.67	8.56
<b>Livestock</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	8.50	10.85	9.06	9.13	<sup>4/</sup>	9.30
January 8 – 14, 2006	8.80	*10.50	8.74	9.12	<sup>4/</sup>	*9.26
April 10 – 16, 2005	9.90	9.60	9.15	9.40	<sup>4/</sup>	9.14
<i>Average hours per week</i>						
<b>HOURS WORKED BY ALL HIRED WORKERS</b>						
April 9 – 15, 2006	40.4	43.1	39.2	48.7	36.6	40.8
January 8 – 14, 2006	39.2	*41.6	39.2	46.9	37.5	38.2
April 10 – 16, 2005	38.7	45.0	42.3	44.8	39.6	39.9

<sup>1/</sup> Excludes Agricultural Service workers.

<sup>2/</sup> United States exclude Alaska.

<sup>3/</sup> Value of any perquisites provided are not included in wage rates.

<sup>4/</sup> Insufficient data for livestock.

\*Revised.

the work force. The higher wages in the Corn Belt I region were due to a lower proportion of part time workers in the work force, strong demand from the nursery and greenhouse industries, and the increasing need for highly skilled machine operators on grain farms. In the Mountain I region, the higher wages were due to more salaried workers putting in fewer hours and a high percentage of nursery and greenhouse workers.

## **RELIABILITY OF FARM LABOR ESTIMATES**

**SURVEY PROCEDURES:** These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) during the last two weeks of April 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 April 9-15, 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 10 and 29 percent at the regional level. The U.S. all hired farm worker wage rate had a relative sampling error of 1.0 percent. The relative sampling error was 1.1 percent for the combined field and livestock worker wage rate. Relative sampling errors for the all hired farm worker wage rate generally ranged between 2 and 9 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 23 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 April 2005 and January 2006 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.