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National Agricultural Statistics Service



News Release

New England Field Office

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USDA SURVEY TO FOCUS ON FARM LABOR

Concord, New Hampshire – How many workers are employed on agricultural operations in New England? What is the average number of hours worked by employees? What wage rates are paid to workers? These are the key questions the New England Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will be asking producers statewide as part of the January Agricultural Labor Survey.

“As labor issues remain a concern in the agriculture industry, the Agricultural Labor Survey is one of the most timely surveys conducted by NASS,” explained Gary Keough, director of the NASS New England Field Office. “Labor expenses account for a significant portion of farmers’ production costs. This survey provides the vital information needed to ensure fair administration of employment regulations affecting farmers and their bottom lines.”

Data from the Agricultural Labor Survey are used to establish minimum wage rates for domestic and foreign agricultural workers, administer farm labor recruitment and placement service programs, and assist legislators in determining labor policies.

“Participation in this survey is greatly encouraged. Accurate information collected directly from farmers and ranchers will provide the foundation for reliable agricultural labor estimates,” said Keough.

During the last two weeks of January, NASS will contact selected New England producers by mail, telephone or personal visit and ask them to provide information on their total number of hired workers, hours worked and wage rates paid during that week. The information will be compiled and analyzed, then published in the USDA quarterly *Farm Labor* report, scheduled to be released on February 20, 2009. Additional Agricultural Labor Surveys will follow in April, July, and October.

As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is confidential by law. “NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses and publishes only state- and national-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified,” stated Keough. All reports are available on the NASS web site: www.nass.usda.gov. For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS New England Field Office at 1-800-642-9571.