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FLORIDA AGRICULTURE

FARM LABOR

May, 2005

FLORIDA

The number of workers paid by farmers and agricultural services totaled 59,000 for the week of April 10 through 16. Farmers hired 49,000 workers compared with 57,000 in April 2004 and 48,000 in January 2005. Agricultural services provided 10,000 paid workers, up 2,000 from last quarter, but 1,000 more than those supplied a year ago.

Dry conditions over most of the central and southern Peninsula during the survey week allowed fieldwork to stay on schedule and increased the danger of wild land fires due to the decrease of soil moisture supplies. Fieldwork slowed due to wet soils in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula areas during the survey week. Cultural practices included continuing fertilizations, herbiciding and applications of insecticides. Spring crop vegetable planting was active over the central and southern Peninsula. The lack of rain in most areas prompted producers to irrigate as needed.

The April all hired worker wage rate averaged $9.27 per hour, 42 cents more than the $8.85 paid last year but 25 cents less than last quarter. Farmers paid an average of $9.31 per hour, 21 cents lower than the $9.52 paid in January, but 52 cents above the $8.79 paid last year. Agricultural services paid workers an average of $9.10 per hour, 40 cents lower than the $9.50 paid last quarter and 15 cents below the $9.25 paid last year.

UNITED STATES

There were 978,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of April 10-16, 2005, down 10 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 746,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 232,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of $9.34 per hour during the April 2005 reference week, up 11 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of $8.55 per hour, up 8 cents from last April, while livestock workers earned $9.23 per hour compared with $8.95 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at $8.73 per hour, was up 14 cents from last year.

The number of hours worked averaged 39.8 hours for hired workers during the survey week, down 2 percent from a year ago.

The largest decreases in the number of hired farm workers from last year occurred in California, Florida, and in the Mountain II (Colorado, Nevada, and Utah), Northeast II (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), and Northern Plains (Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) regions. In California, a weak El Nino weather pattern brought unseasonably cool temperatures and record rainfall to the southern half of the State from January through March, affecting quality and interrupting planting, harvesting, and crop development. The wet weather had the largest impact on vegetable crops and nursery and floriculture production, which kept the demand for hired workers well behind the previous year. Field work in Florida was hampered by wet soils in northern areas, and estimated citrus production was down considerably from 2004. These factors combined to reduce the need for hired workers. In the Mountain II region, heavy snowfall and rains in Colorado slowed field activities, so fewer workers were required. The cool, wet spring and below normal soil temperatures in the Northeast II region delayed planting of field and vegetable crops and slowed the development of hay and pastures. Thus, the demand for hired workers was lower. In the Northern Plains region, wet conditions limited field activities and lessened the need for hired workers.

The largest increases in the number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in the Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas), Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), Mountain III (Arizona and New Mexico), and Appalachian I (North Carolina and Virginia) regions. Ideal weather conditions in the Southern Plains region allowed land preparation and planting to progress rapidly, increasing the need for field workers. In the Delta region, Louisiana's warm, dry weather more than offset the wet conditions experienced in Arkansas and Mississippi, which led to greater demand for hired workers. In the Mountain III region, continued expansion in the dairy, vegetable, nursery, and greenhouse industries necessitated more hired workers. Strong demand from vegetable, tobacco, and Christmas tree operations in the Appalachian I region kept worker numbers above last year.

Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Southern Plains, Mountain III, Northern Plains, and Florida regions. The higher wages in the Southern Plains were due to a larger concentration of full time workers. In the Mountain III and Florida regions, wages were up due to a higher percentage of skilled vegetable, nursery, and greenhouse workers. Wages in the Northern Plains region were higher because of more salaried workers putting in fewer hours, which pushed their hourly wage higher.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Division of Marketing and Development

University of Florida
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TABLE 1 -- Florida agricultural workers, number of workers, wage rates, and hours worked, April 10 - 16, 2005, 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		*Thousands*		*Hours*	*Dollars Per Hour* [1/]		
2005							
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 10 - 16	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
2003							
October 12 -18	49.0	43.0	6.0	39.1	9.53	8.55	7.95
July 6 - 12	45.0	39.0	6.0	39.0	9.55	8.55	8.30
April 6 - 12	53.0	42.0	11.0	38.3	8.86	8.05	8.10
HIRED BY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES							
2005							
April 10 - 16	10.0			39.0	9.10		
January 9 - 15	8.0			40.0	9.50		
2004							
October 10 - 16	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		
2003							
October 12 -18	4.0			38.0	9.65		
July 6 - 12	3.0			41.0	9.25		
April 6 - 12	17.0			33.0	9.40		
HIRED BY BOTH FARMERS & AGRICULTURAL SERVICES							
2005							
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		
2003							
October 12 -18	53.0				9.54		
July 6 - 12	48.0				9.53		
April 6 - 12	70.0				8.98		

[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, April 10 - 16, 2005, with comparisons [1/]

Item	Florida	California	Texas & Oklahoma	Arizona & New Mexico	Hawaii	United States [2/]
			Thousands			
ALL HIRED WORKERS						
April 10 - 16, 2005	49	175	55	18	7	746
January 9 - 15, 2005	48	*143	50	19	7	*589
April 11 - 17, 2004	57	234	46	17	7	827
EXPECTED TO WORK						
150 days or more						
April 10 - 16, 2005	41	143	47	17	6	596
January 9 - 15, 2005	37	*119	41	17	6	*494
April 11 - 17, 2004	53	190	38	16	6	651
149 days or less						
April 10 - 16, 2005	8	32	8	1	1	150
January 9 - 15, 2005	11	*24	9	2	1	*95
April 11 - 17, 2004	4	44	8	1	1	176
			Dollars per hour [3/]			
ALL HIRED WORKER WAGE RATE						
April 10 - 16, 2005	9.31	9.48	9.28	9.18	11.33	9.34
January 9 - 15, 2005	9.52	*9.82	9.56	8.61	11.52	*9.78
April 11 - 17, 2004	8.79	9.30	8.13	8.37	11.26	9.23
WAGES BY TYPE OF WORKER						
Field & Livestock						
April 10 - 16, 2005	8.37	8.82	8.53	8.51	9.79	8.73
January 9 - 15, 2005	8.51	*8.86	8.75	8.02	9.98	*8.90
April 11 - 17, 2004	7.94	8.56	7.62	7.81	9.66	8.59
Field						
April 10 - 16, 2005	8.20	8.59	8.13	7.95	9.67	8.55
January 9 - 15, 2005	8.50	*8.56	8.01	7.70	9.94	*8.71
April 11 - 17, 2004	7.85	8.42	7.50	7.55	9.51	8.47
Livestock						
April 10 - 16, 2005	9.90	10.34	9.15	9.40	[4/]	9.23
January 9 - 15, 2005	8.60	*9.93	9.35	8.41	[4/]	*9.20
April 11 - 17, 2004	8.60	9.83	7.93	8.20	[4/]	8.95
			Average hours per week			
HOURS WORKED BY ALL HIRED WORKERS						
April 10 - 16, 2005	38.7	44.2	42.3	44.8	39.6	39.8
January 9 - 15, 2005	38.7	*40.1	37.0	45.2	36.3	*37.0
April 11 - 17, 2004	38.3	45.9	41.0	45.7	37.7	40.6

[1/] Excludes Agricultural Service workers.

[2/] United States excludes Alaska.

[3/] Value of any perquisites provided are not included in wage rates.

[4/] Insufficient data for this category; included in all hired wages.

* 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 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 10-16, 2005.

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 5 and 28 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 0.9 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 7 percent at the regional levels. Relative sampling errors for wage rates published by type of farm and economic class of farm generally ranged between 2 and 18 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 2004 and January 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.