

Language Study of Hawaii Agricultural Workers

July 14, 2006

Language Comprehension Varies

This study shows the most prevalent first language among Hawaii agricultural workers, including contract workers and workers obtained by contract, who handle pesticides or who work in fields where pesticides are applied, is Ilocano at 2,560 or 40 percent of the total estimate of 6,410, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The second most prevalent language among Hawaii agricultural workers is English, estimated at 2,280 or 36 percent.

Of those workers whose first language is Ilocano, 2,040 or 80 percent understand written instructions in their first language. Of the same population, 2,270 or 89 percent comprehend English verbal instructions and 1,520 or 59 percent comprehend English written instructions. Basic math comprehension is estimated at 36 percent among native Ilocano-speaking workers.

Among native English-speaking agricultural workers, basic math skills are estimated at 89 percent.

Table 1. Language Skills of Hawaii Agricultural Workers, 2005

Language	Number of Workers					
	Total Workers by First Language	First Language Comprehension		English Comprehension		
		Verbal Instructions	Written Instructions	Verbal Instructions	Written Instructions	Math ¹
Chinese	30	30	30	30	20	10
English	2,280	2,280	2,270	2,280	2,270	2,020
Ilocano	2,560	2,560	2,040	2,270	1,520	930
Spanish	210	210	150	190	130	100
Tagalog	250	250	200	130	110	110
Other ²	1,080	1,080	950	890	520	200
Total	6,410	6,410	5,640	5,790	4,570	3,370

¹ Math skills to perform tasks on pesticide labels written in English

² Includes Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, Samoan, Other Asian not listed above, Other European not listed above, and Other Filipino languages not listed above

The Hawaii Field Office of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service conducted a special survey of Hawaii's farmers to obtain the results used in this report. We appreciate the cooperation of Hawaii's agricultural producers who responded to this survey.

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Hawaii agricultural operators' first language is predominantly English, at 2,730 or 88 percent of the total estimate of 3,090.

Table 2. Language Skills of Hawaii Agricultural Operators, 2005

Language	Number of Operators					
	Total Operators by First Language	First Language Comprehension		English Comprehension		
		Verbal Instructions	Written Instructions	Verbal Instructions	Written Instructions	Math ¹
Chinese	20	20	20	20	20	20
English	2,730	2,730	2,730	2,730	2,730	2,710
Ilocano	190	190	180	180	180	180
Spanish	20	20	20	20	20	20
Other ²	130	130	120	120	90	90
Total	3,090	3,090	3,070	3,070	3,040	3,020

¹ Math skills to perform tasks on pesticide labels written in English

² Includes Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, Samoan, Other Asian not listed above, Other European not listed above, and Other Filipino languages not listed above