



UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA, AFL-CIO

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FARM WORKER FACTS

There are nearly 3.5 million farm workers in the United States today. Although they represent many races, creeds and colors, the greater majority of farm workers are native-born blacks and Mexican-Americans. They sow and harvest crops that net growers billions of dollars in profits every year, yet the farm workers do not share in those bountiful profits accruing from their labor. Most earn incomes which fall far below the federal poverty level.

Compelled to accept an inadequate wage, the farm workers suffer exceptional hardships - substandard housing, malnutrition, illiteracy and disease. And barred from the laws which protect the rights of other laborers in this land (e.g. the National Labor Relations Act), the farm workers have no immediate remedy for their special plight.

In short, the workers who gather the fruits and vegetables from fields across this country, endure conditions unknown to any Americans today. To use the words of the Preamble to the 1970 Florida Laws, the farm worker is "the most economically and socially deprived segment of the population."

There is no way, of course, to fully convey the suffering of these workers. Facts and statistics can only explain a fraction of their story. But facts and statistics reveal at least one indisputable, painful truth: the farm worker lives and works in a nightmare and, ironically, can not afford to buy the same fruits and vegetables that s/he harvests for us to put on our tables.

- WAGES - The average farm worker in the nation earns \$1,576 per year. (US Department of Agriculture)
- The average farm worker family earns \$2,021 per year. (Migrant Research Project)

EMPLOYMENT

- The average farm worker in the nation can only find work 4.9 months per year. (US Department of Agriculture)
- More than 95% of all farm workers work for labor contractors, who dictate the workers' place of employment, hours of work and rate of pay. (New College)
- In March 1973, a labor contractor in Homestead, Florida was charged with enslaving 28 farm workers at the Far South Labor Camp. The year before, 11 other labor contractors in the state were indicted for holding their employees against their will. (The Farmworkers: A cry for Justice from Florida's fields)

CHILD LABOR

- About 800,000 paid agricultural workers - or one out of every four - are under the age of 16. (US Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor)
- About 375,000 paid agricultural workers - or about one out of

