



August 2, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

The Agriculture Workforce Coalition urges the Senate to pass an agriculture workforce reform bill this Congress that provides the solution American agriculture needs to defend our national security through protecting our domestic agricultural production, and curtailing rising food costs for every consumer.

Food security is national security. American farmers and consumers need the U.S. Senate to pass farmworker visa reform this year. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the war in Ukraine, it has reiterated that our national security is tied to our ability to feed ourselves, and that ability is currently under threat due to the agricultural workforce crisis across America's farms and agribusinesses. The domestic workforce shortage remains one of the greatest challenges impacting our farmers today. We must address this workforce crisis threatening farms across the United States so our producers can continue to feed, clothe, and fuel our nation.

Agricultural workforce reform not only helps farmers, ranchers and farm workers, but a stable agricultural workforce is good for the U.S. economy, which impacts every consumer, according to a 2022 study by Texas A&M International University. Consumers are seeing high costs of milk, produce, fruits, meat, and eggs in the supermarket. In fact, the latest Consumer Price Index report by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics revealed that butter and margarine increased 26.3 percent, fruits and vegetables rose 8.1 percent, and cereals and bakery products rose 13.8 percent. This reinforces the urgency for agricultural workforce reform.

We also know that inaction will force many farmers to consider whether they can continue in labor-intensive agriculture. Unfortunately, we have already seen a decline in the number of farms over the last decade (2010-2021). According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the number of farms in the U.S. has decreased by more than 185,000 farms and the total land in farms has decreased by around 25 million acres. When farms go out of business rural America suffers. We know statistically that every seasonal worker supports three to four full-time year-round jobs. The economic impact reaches further to truck and equipment dealerships, restaurants, and the other businesses on main street. In order to protect America's domestic agricultural production, the Senate must act now to provide stability for our existing workers and make key reforms to the H-2A program, the visa program farmers use to hire legal workers to supplement their U.S. workforce.

Reforms that provide farmers certainty and mitigate against spiraling production costs will support three goals in America's interest: affordable food, domestic production, and national

security. As representatives of agricultural organizations throughout the United States, we stand ready to help you develop and pass legislation to fully address the needs of American agriculture and every American consumer. We thank Senator Bennet and Senator Crapo for their bipartisan leadership on this critical issue and encourage you to work with them to advance a Senate bill.

Thank you for your urgent attention to solving America's agricultural workforce crisis.

Sincerely,

AWC Steering Committee

American Farm Bureau Federation
AmericanHort
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
International Fresh Produce Association
National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
USAFarmers
U.S. Apple Association
Western Growers

Additional Signatories

cc: U.S. Senate