

Review of literature

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Overview of agricultural workforce in California Land use pattern in the world and the U.S.:

According to the Crop production and Natural resource use estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2015, around 11 percent or nearly 1.5 billion hectares of the total surface area of the earth (nearly 13.4 billion hectares) was used for crop production. This figure refers to the percentage of arable land which is under permanent crop cultivation. It represents nearly 36 percent of the total land which is estimated to be suitable for crop production to certain extent¹. According to the United States Department of Agriculture 2012 report, slightly over 40 percent of all land in the United States was farmland. Between the years 2007 and 2012 as per the agriculture census estimates, although the number of farms declined, the average farm size was found to have increased. There were nearly 2 million farms in the country spanning a total of 915 million hectares in 2012, with the average size of a farm being 434 acres. Nearly 45.4 percent of the agricultural land was permanent pasture, 42.6 percent was cropland, and 8.4 percent was woodland. The remaining 3.6 percent was land in farmsteads, buildings and livestock facilities².

Land use Pattern in California: According to the Census of Agriculture conducted by the Farmland Information Center, there were a total of 77,587 farms spanning a total of 25,569,001 acres in California³. More than 25 percent of the land area of California is used for agriculture of which over half of the 27.6 million acres of agricultural land is pasture and about 40 percent is cropland. Most of the farms in the state are either family owned or individually operated. They are small in terms of cash receipts with most sales coming from farms with cash receipts higher than half million dollars. California has a greater share of female farm operators and farmers with Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander backgrounds than the rest of the country⁴. According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture statistics in 2018, California's farms and ranches received almost \$50 billion in cash receipts for their output. California's agricultural abundance includes more than 400 commodities. It produces over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts. The top commodities for 2018 include- Dairy Products, Milk (\$6.37 billion), grapes (\$6.25 billion), almonds (\$5.47 billion), cattle and calves (\$3.19 billion), pistachios (\$2.62 billion) strawberries (\$2.34 billion), lettuce (\$1.81 billion), floriculture (\$1.22 billion), tomatoes (\$1.20 billion) and oranges (\$1.12 billion)⁵.

Demographics of Agricultural workers in the U.S: According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the agricultural workforce has mostly comprised of a mixture of self-employed farm operators, their family members and hired workers. As rising agricultural productivity due to mechanization reduced the need for labor, from 1950 to 1990, both types of employment were in long term decline, but employment levels have stabilized since 1990. Hired agricultural workers make up less than 1 percent of all U.S. wage and salary workers⁶. According to data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture, labor costs represented 12 percent of production expenses for all farms, but as much as 43 percent on greenhouse and nursery operations, and 39 percent for fruits and tree nuts. The majority are wage and salary workers, hired directly by farmers, but some are employees of agricultural service companies. Large numbers of hired

agricultural workers are Hispanic immigrants, and many lack authorizations to work legally in the United States. Over the past 30 years, wages for hired agricultural workers have gradually risen in relation to wages for the average nonsupervisory worker in a nonfarm occupation⁷.

As per the USDA, Economic Research Service, analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey in 2017, nearly 75 percent of agricultural workers are male with an average age of 38.8 years. Among them 54 percent are U.S. citizens, nearly 57 percent are of Hispanic- Mexican origin, 32 percent identify as White non-Hispanic, 6 percent identify as other Hispanic and rest 5 percent belong to other races. Among them 49 percent are married, 20 percent are less than 25 years of age and 34 percent are over 44 years of age. Nearly 53 percent lack high school education with 28 percent having a high school diploma or its equivalent and less than 19 percent having some college education⁸. In recent years, agricultural workers have become more settled, with fewer workers migrating long distances from home to work, and fewer pursuing traditional seasonal follow-the-crop migration. The number of young people and recent immigrants who choose to work in agriculture has fallen in recent years, as a result of which the agricultural workforce is getting older.

Demographics of Agricultural workers in California: As per the Center for Farmworker families, between one third and half of all agricultural workers in the U.S reside in California (500,000 - 800,000 agricultural workers). Approximately 75 percent of California's agricultural workers are undocumented with number being nearly 83 percent in Santa Cruz County. Approximately one third are women, and they range in age from their teens to their sixties. In addition, there are nearly 400,000 children who work in the fields⁹. As per the American Community survey conducted in 2011, in California 77 percent of the agricultural workers were male, 25 percent were between 25 and 44 years of age with 18 percent being below 24 and 26 percent being above 45 years of age. Among them nearly 92 percent were Latino with 5 percent identifying as White, 2 percent identifying as Asian Americans and 1 percent identifying as African Americans. Among them 77 percent were non-citizens, 14 percent were naturalized citizens and 9 percent were citizens. In this community 78 percent lacked a high School diploma, 1 percent had gone to college and 21 percent had GED. The median income was \$14,000 in 2011 and only 37 percent having health insurance (19 percent-private, 2 percent direct and 16 percent-Medical)¹⁰.

Problems among Agricultural workers: Women agricultural workers are often systematically subjected to sexual slurs, groping, threats, beatings and even rape in the fields. In California, 80 percent of agricultural worker women claim that they have experienced sexual harassment¹¹. State-run camps house only 12,000 agricultural workers, or approximately 1.5 percent of the state's agricultural worker population. In addition, migrants can live in the camps only from May 1, to the end of November. If they wish to return, they must move 50 miles or more away from the camp during the off-season. This interrupts their children's education with some attending up to 4 schools in two countries during the year, as a result of which their chance of high school graduation is only 10 percent⁸. The Environmental Protection agency (EPA) estimates that nearly 300,000 agricultural workers are poisoned by pesticides nationwide each year. An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 cases of physician-diagnosed pesticide poisoning have been found to occur in U.S.

agricultural workers, due to which the average life expectancy of agricultural workers is only 49 years. California is the deadliest state in the U.S. for Mexican workers where nearly 80 percent are more likely to die on the job than their native born counterparts¹². The government and the citizens of California must come together to solve these grave problems affecting our vulnerable Agricultural worker community.

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