

Farm Labor



National
Agricultural
Statistics
Service

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Washington, D.C.

Released January 10, 1992, by the Agricultural Statistics Board. Estimates refer to the week of December 8-14, 1991.

Number of Hired Workers Down

There were 214 thousand hired workers on farms and ranches in the four surveyed States during the week of December 8-14, 1991. This compares with 270 thousand workers during the November 1991, survey week. No comparable survey was conducted in December 1990. There were 68.0 thousand agricultural service employees working on farms and ranches in California and Florida compared to 51.0 thousand in November.

Average December wage rates received by hired workers in the four States ranged from \$5.10 per hour in Texas to \$6.70 per hour in California. Wages were higher when compared with November in all four surveyed States. In December, agricultural service workers were paid an average of \$6.40 and \$6.60 per hour in California and Florida, respectively.

During the survey week of December 8-14, 1991, significant rains fell in portions of Texas. In eastern Texas, rainfall during the week, in combination with heavy rain during the previous 3 weeks, caused widespread flooding. Completion of small grain seeding was delayed. Cotton producers in the Texas Plains made good harvest progress until midweek when rain showers halted activities. Peanut and pecan harvests were slowed by rain. Sunflower and sugarbeet harvests remained active, with some rain delays in the High Plains. Vegetable harvest operations continued in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Rains delayed vegetable harvest activities at midweek in the San Antonio-Winter Garden area. Pecan harvest continued in New Mexico. Picking of some late maturing cotton fields continued in California. Kiwifruit harvest was winding down, while date and persimmon harvests continued. Avocado picking was underway in western Riverside County. Cold, frosty mornings forced California citrus growers to run water and use wind machines to protect fruit, with picking of navel oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and tangerines active. Asparagus harvest was active in the Coachella Valley. Broccoli, carrot, cauliflower, and celery harvests continued. The lettuce harvest season was closing in the Santa Maria area. Fall potato movement continued in the Tulelake and Butte Valley areas. Sugarcane harvest and planting were active in Florida. Early orange harvest was very active, while grapefruit, tangerine, and tangelo picking continued. Harvest of fall vegetable crops was slowing, while planting and harvest of winter crops was increasing. Florida's volume leaders were tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, lettuce, snap beans, and celery.

For information, call Tom Kurtz (202) 690-3228. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

All Hired Workers, December 8-14, 1991 1/

State	:	Number of Workers	:	Wage Rates <u>2/</u>
	:	Thousands		Dollars Per Hour
FL	:	67		6.20
TX	:	33		5.10
NM	:	4		5.20
CA	:	110		6.70

Agricultural Service Workers, December 8-14, 1991

State	:	Number of Workers Working on Farms	:	Wage Rates <u>2/</u>
	:	Thousands		Dollars Per Hour
FL	:	21.0		6.60
CA	:	47.0		6.40

All Hired Workers, November 10-16, 1991 1/

State	:	Number of Workers	:	Wage Rates <u>2/</u>
	:	Thousands		Dollars Per Hour
FL	:	77		6.05
TX	:	38		4.72
NM	:	5		4.43
CA	:	150		6.31

Agricultural Service Workers, November 10-16, 1991

State	:	Number of Workers Working on Farms	:	Wage Rates <u>2/</u>
	:	Thousands		Dollars Per Hour
FL	:	10.0		6.30
CA	:	41.0		6.13

1/ Excludes Agricultural Service Workers.

2/ Benefits such as housing and meals are provided some workers but the values are not included in the wage rates.

Farm Labor

Reliability of Farm Labor Estimates

Survey Procedures: These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service during the last two weeks of December 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 aerial photography. 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 list of farms; those not found on the list are included in the labor survey sample to represent all farms not on the NASS list. 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 December 8-14, 1991.

Reliability: Two types of errors, sampling and nonsampling, are possible in an estimate based on a sample survey. Both types affect the "precision" 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 generally ranged between 10 and 25 percent at the published State level. Relative sampling errors for the all hired farm worker wage rate generally ranged between 3 and 7 percent.

Nonsampling errors can occur in complete censuses 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 coding or processing the data. Special efforts are taken at each step of the survey to minimize nonsampling 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 November 1991 were subject to revision with this report. No revisions were made but previous data are reprinted in this report for your information.

The next "Farm Labor" report will be released at 3:00 p.m. ET on February 18, 1992.

The February 18th report will have information for the survey week of January 12-18, 1992. The report will include the number of All Hired Workers and the All Hired Worker Wage Rates for the monthly and seasonal States along with regional and U.S. level information. The monthly States are California, Florida, New Mexico, and Texas. The seasonal States are Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin. Regional and U.S. level information will also include the number of self-employed and unpaid workers along with the corresponding average hours worked (including hired). Wage rates by method of pay, type of worker, type of farm, and economic class of farm will also be available at the regional and U.S. level. The number of Agricultural Service Workers and the corresponding wage rates (including by method of pay and for field workers) will be published for Florida and California.

