



10

WAYS TO IMPROVE RECRUITMENT OF GUEST WORKERS

ACCORDING TO FARMWORKERS





INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNEY TO BETTER RECRUITMENT

A farmworker's recruitment experience, whether positive or negative, starts to affect the strength of the employee-employer relationship well before workers show up at the farm gate. Investing in a better recruitment experience can build trust and open the door for higher levels of employee engagement from day one.

Research by Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) on worker recruitment in the fresh produce industry, executed by &Wider with support from CIERTO Global, examined current recruitment processes and gathered suggestions for improvement directly from Mexican farmworkers who had been recruited to travel for employment on fresh produce farms in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Nearly 1,300 interactions with more than 650 workers via in-person and telephone interviews and a mobile phone survey took place from August 2020 to March 2021. The scope of the project spanned the complete recruitment and employment experience: from community of origin to place of employment and back home again.

According to farmworkers, the five factors that create a negative recruitment experience include:

- 1. Isolation and lack of community
- 2. Contract terms that are unclear
- 3. Threats to their physical safety
- 4. Verbal abuse and false promises
- 5. Lack of clarity around costs

Top 3 Negative Experiences Reported by Surveyed Workers



THE GOAL: Improve recruitment by taking steps to provide community support, clear and trustworthy information and assurance of physical and financial safety over the entire journey.

10 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

Results from the surveys identified 10 top ways for employers to improve the recruitment process and support worker transition to the farm. These action steps provide workers with improved connections and safety throughout the process, better communication about the job site and terms, plus upfront information on true costs of accepting employment.



CONNECT

Opportunities for social connection during the full circle of the recruitment journey improve the recruitment experience by addressing the needs of the whole person. Traveling farmworkers report that community support would involve creating opportunities for friendship with other workers on the journey and on the farm, as well as having a central point of contact who could assist with settling in and act as an advocate for workers' physical safety and health.



1

Appoint a person, one who speaks the workers' native language and is familiar with the farm and local services, to greet and welcome the arriving workers

70%

of workers were in support of a recruitment model that includes a support person or mentor who helps ensure safety, information sharing, training and social integration on the farm

2

Provide necessary PPE and required work gear and equipment so workers don't have to figure out how to get supplies in an unfamiliar environment

97%

of workers said medical and health insurance was important [to their safety on the job]

3

Create on-farm opportunities for building friendship and social connections, such as opt-in social meetings after training sessions

92%

of workers indicated that having social opportunities to meet other workers and make friends before the work starts was important to them

"By creating community, life is easier and more pleasant, which can also help solve doubts or work problems and thus increase productivity."

Interviewed Farmworker



INFORM

Clear and comprehensive information about the farm, the job, contractual terms and costs of the journey goes a long way in establishing trust for farmworkers as they make decisions about employment opportunities and consider their personal and family health and safety needs.

4

Provide recruitment information in Spanish

5

Open a direct line of communication from the farm to farmworkers' home communities, whether online or through a designated employee

6

Make accurate photos and videos of the farm and housing accommodations available

7

On the farm, provide information on local laws, company policies and where and how to report harassment

Information channels considered most trustworthy (multiple options could be selected):

61%

Recruitment office or recruitment agency

46%

Friends and family

41%

Church

"Really what we need is that what they are showing is the truth, the photos for example, and that really helps us, not only what is written on paper."
Interviewed Farmworker

Threats and exploitative promises:

70%

of workers said threats to send workers home or not hire them again happen frequently

48%

of workers said employers make exploitative promises





PROVIDE CLARITY ON COSTS

Clear, high-quality information provides farmworkers with assurance of financial safety by protecting them from unexpected expenses as they journey from their communities of origin to the farm and then home again.

8

Ensure that recruitment information is clear and honest with regard to contract terms and the cost associated with work on the farm

“Before we arrive at the workplace, we can see the contract and read through it together as a group in order to see if anything has changed, and if something seems different we can tell the person in charge to resolve any doubts.”

Interviewed Farmworker

9

Consider provisions for expenses for the journeys to and from the farm

Unexpected expenses encountered on the journey home from the farm:

40%

40% of respondents mentioned unexpected food and/or meal costs

22%

22% of respondents mentioned unexpected transportation costs

16%

16% of respondents mentioned unexpected hotel/room costs

10

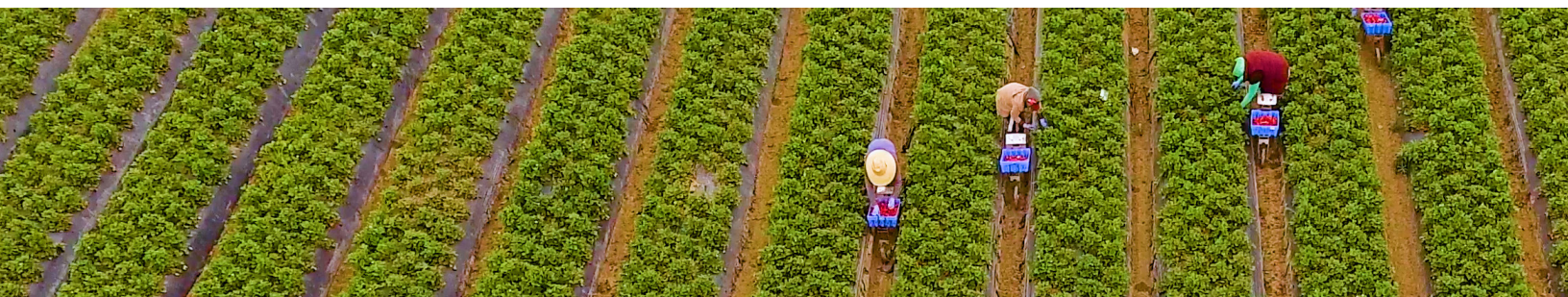
Work with vetted farm labor contractors to ensure illegal recruitment fees are not charged

25%

25% of workers said recruitment fees are frequently charged

20%

20% of workers expected to pay recruitment fees



NEXT STEPS

ENGAGING YOUR WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED RECRUITMENT

Improvements to the recruitment process can reduce worker vulnerability and lead to the establishment of a more engaged and satisfied workforce that returns year over year. EFI's free [Responsible Recruitment Scorecard](#) can help you identify your risks and take steps toward greater assurance of ethical recruitment in your labor supply chain.

To download the complete study results and learn more about responsible recruitment, visit equitablefood.org/recruitment



200 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001

202.730.6672

equitablefood.org