



EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON AGRICULTURE AND IMMIGRATION REFORM

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Overview

- Field Report
- AgJOBS State of Play
- Other Dynamics
- Closing thoughts about the future



Who Is ACIR?

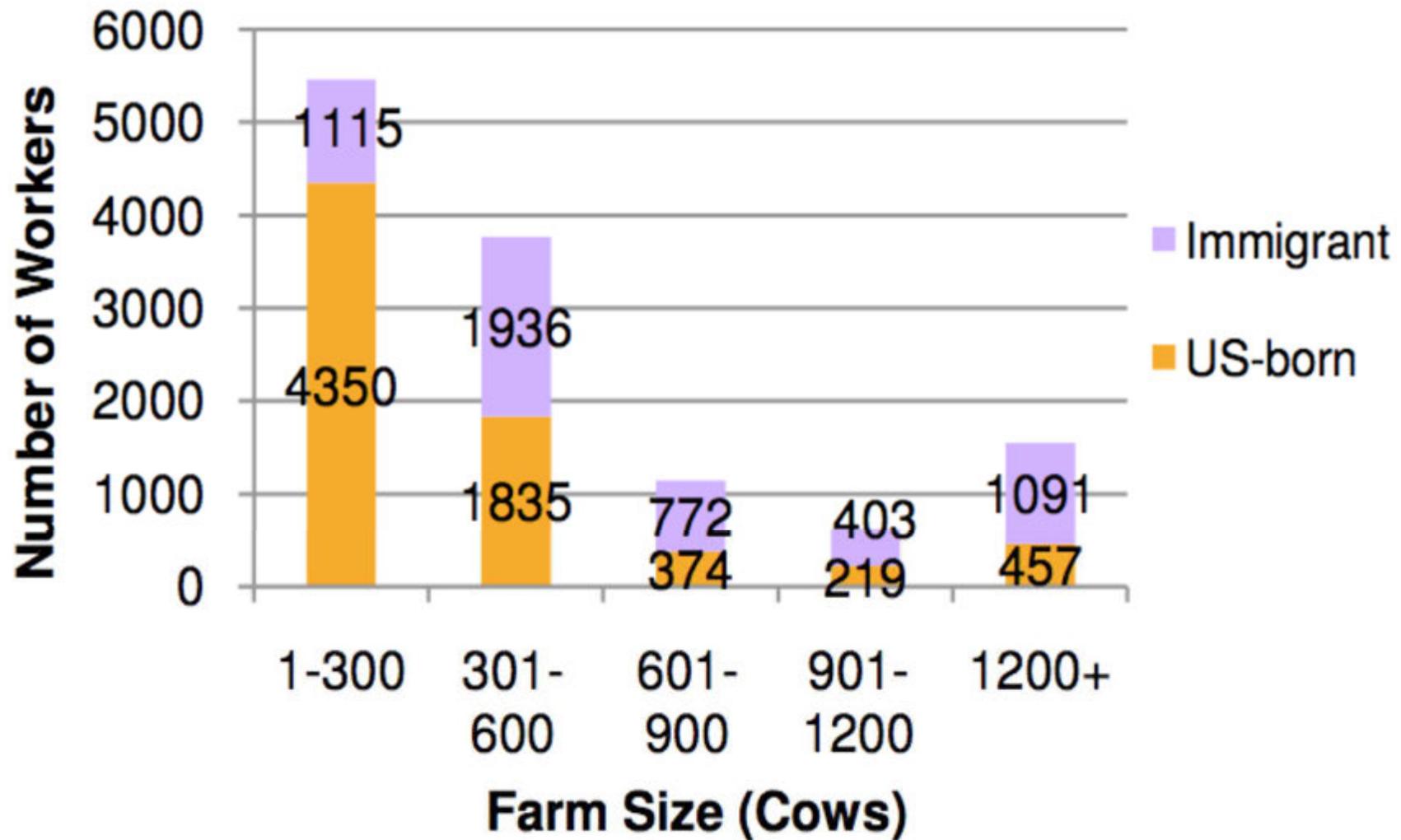
- National ad hoc coalition formed in 2001
- Solely focused on agricultural labor reform legislation
- Over 300 national, regional, state groups representing fruit, vegetable, dairy, livestock, nursery, greenhouse, Christmas tree producers

Field Report

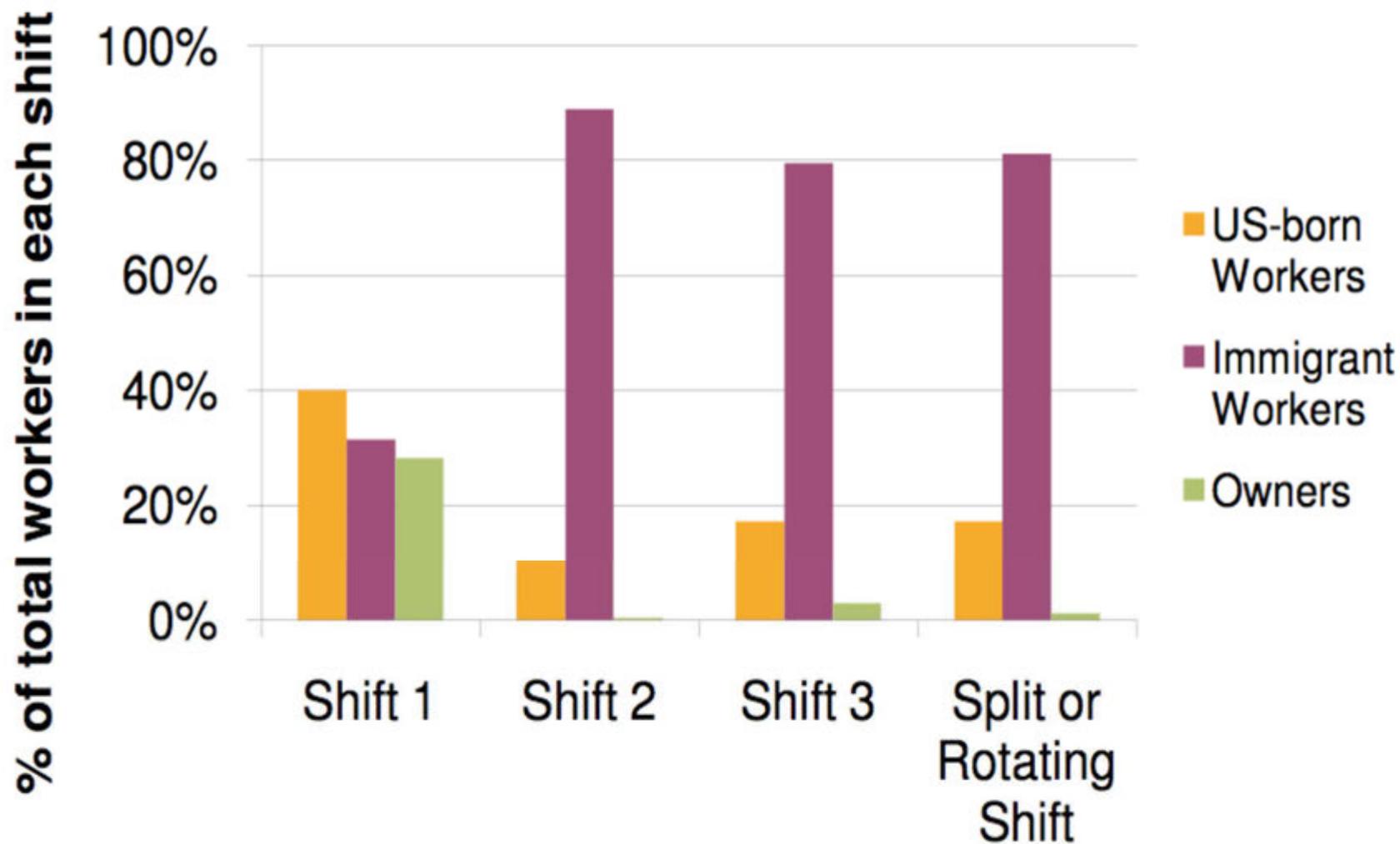
- Farmers who are still farming are still hiring, employing farm workers
- While signs of some workforce reduction for a variety of reasons, master narrative is one of relative employment stability
- ~75% of farmworkers likely unauthorized
- Virtually entire applicant pool unauthorized
- Clear anecdotal evidence that some former farmworkers who left for other jobs are returning. Most feared unauthorized
- Despite recession, few US workers applying

Spotlight on:
Wisconsin Dairies

Hired Labor on Wisconsin Dairy Farms



Who Works When?



“So as our last two children entered high school, and I realized that soon I would have no family labor to rely on, we moved our farm to all hired labor. I have not been able to hire an American citizen since 1997. I have tried! The way I see it, if we didn’t have Hispanics to rely on for a work force, I don't believe I could continue farming.”

– WI dairy farmer with 150 cows,

2007

AgJOBS

- ⦿ Landmark agreement among worker, employer advocates
- ⦿ Reached in 2003, passed Senate 2006
- ⦿ Two-part approach:
 - Significant overhaul of H-2A program
 - Earned legalization for experienced farmworkers subject to strict conditions

AgJOBS State of Play

- S.1038, H.R.2414 reintroduced May 14
- Bills essentially same as last Congress
- Senate: Feinstein is champion. 16 original cosponsors
- House: Berman (D-CA, Putnam (R-FL) plus 25 cosponsors
 - varied geography, ideology...mix of aggies, blue dogs, Hispanic Caucus, the occasional liberal / conservative
 - Peterson, Lofgren, Gutierrez...etc.

State of Play...

- ⦿ Unlikely that Congress will consider AgJOBS ahead of broader “comprehensive” discussion
- ⦿ AgJOBS can move as part of comprehensive or smaller package
- ⦿ Unique place in the debate...only place where “left/right” agreement is intact
- ⦿ Ag presents political “training wheels”

Who Supports AgJOBS?

- Hundreds of producer groups
- Unions, worker and immigrant advocates
- Faith based organizations
- General business e.g. US Chamber, Small Business Legislative Council
- Government groups like Nat'l Assn of Counties, State Agriculture Secretaries and Commissioners
- Conservative groups like Americans for Tax Reform, Americas Majority Foundation

Other Dynamics

- ◎ H-2A regs

- Mixed bag at outset. Future looks doubtful.
- Challenge: managing chaos

- ◎ Obama enforcement stance

- From “undocumented worker” to “employer”
- Stepped up I-9 audits and investigations

- ◎ “No-match” rule

- Ball is in Court’s court

Thoughts Going Forward

- ◎ “We hold these threats to be self-evident...”
 - Management decisions to scale back or substitute
 - Next generation says “no, thanks...”
 - Offshoring, loss of market share
- ◎ If Past is Prologue...
 - Neither side has a realistic opportunity to improve its position by waiting
 - One-sided victories likely to be short-lived

The AgJOBS Journey...

