

# Farm Labor and Mexico's Export Produce Industry

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# Highlights

- Mexican ag: 6-7 million employed, including 2.5-3 million hired farm workers
  - Little knowledge of workers employed in export-oriented Mexican agriculture
- US ag: average 750,000 FTE farmers and 1.2 million FTE hired. 70% born in Mexico; 70% of Mex unauth, so half of FWs unauthorized
- Mex-US: trade deficit of \$64 billion in 2016, including a \$6 billion deficit in ag goods
  - US exports grains, meat & dairy to Mexico
  - US imports fresh fruits & vegs from Mexico

## **Project goal: Mexican F&V ag & farm workers**

- US goal in NAFTA re-negotiations: reduce trade deficit, uncertainty & F&V integration?
- Examples of poor conditions for farm workers employed in Mexican F&V exported to US (LA Times)
- Purpose: obtain reliable top-down data
  - Production & supply chain analysis of tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, berries, & avocados
  - Interview 300 farm workers in each of nine sites (Sinaloa, the Bajío, Jalisco, Michoacán)
  - Conduct focus groups in 9 areas to understand the data & context

1 trafficked worker = 1 too many  
How typical is what LAT reported 12/14?



The image shows a video player interface for a Los Angeles Times article. The background is a photograph of a red pickup truck driving away on a road, and a grey SUV in the foreground with several people standing on its roof rack. The text 'Los Angeles Times' is at the top, followed by 'PRODUCT OF MEXICO' in large white letters. A play button icon is centered, with 'Watch more' below it. A 'Scroll to read' button with a downward arrow is also present. The bottom navigation bar includes the Los Angeles Times logo and menu items: 'Product of Mexico', 'Harsh Harvest', 'No Way Out', 'Company Stores', 'Child Labor', 'Portraits of Labor', and 'En Español'.

Los Angeles Times

# PRODUCT OF MEXICO

Watch more

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Los Angeles Times Product of Mexico Harsh Harvest No Way Out Company Stores Child Labor Portraits of Labor En Español

# LAT: focus on poor on-farm housing



# LAT: contractors recruit & transport indigenous



Peasants from Mexico's indigenous regions are bused to export farms in the west and northwest to pick and process fruits and vegetables. The Huasteca region is a prime source of agricultural labor.

■ Farming areas ■ Sources of indigenous labor



Sources: MapBox, OpenStreetMap  
Graphics reporting by Richard Marosi  
Len De Groot @latimesgraphics

# Outcomes: reliable data, stakeholder involvement

- Expected outcomes:
  - Fill data voids
  - Determine correlates of good & bad conditions, recs to stakeholders to minimize conditions that can lead to exploitation and trafficking
- Stakeholder involvement:
  - Goal: improve protections for workers by involving employers, govt agencies, NGOs, & buyers in project design
  - Get recommendations implemented
- Timeline: production analysis, interviews  
Feb 2018; Fall 2018 progress workshop

# Today: Mex & US farm workers, trade

- Panel 1: hired Mexican farm workers & issues that arise during recruitment of workers for export-oriented F&V farms
- Panel 2: hired US farm workers and issues: universal issues with seasonality, contractors, migrants
- Panel 3: Ag trade: Mexican exports of fruits and vegetables to the US
- Panel 4: Protecting farm workers in Mexico & the US: what do we know? What works?