

Rural Migration News

Blog 250

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H-2A Continues to Expand

The H-2A program allows US farm employers to fill seasonal jobs with H-2A guest workers after they try and fail to recruit US workers at DOL-specified wages. DOL must also determine that the presence of the H-2A workers will not adversely affect US workers.

The H-2A program has been expanding. Fewer than 80,000 jobs were certified to be filled by H-2A workers in FY10, and over 317,000 were certified in FY21, up 15 percent

from 275,000 in FY20. About 80 percent of jobs certified result in the issuance of H-2A visas, meaning that 250,000 H-2A visas were likely issued to foreigners filling seasonal jobs on US farms.

H-2A workers are in the US an average six months, so that 250,000 H-2A workers fill about 125,000 full-time equivalent jobs, which means that 11 percent of the 1.1 million FTE jobs in US crop agriculture are filled by H-2A workers. Citizens of over

80 countries including Haiti may receive H-2A visas, but over 90 percent go to Mexicans.

DOL received over 16,300 applications requesting certification to fill 330,500 jobs with H-2A workers, and certified 15,600 applications and 317,600 jobs, 96 percent of the applications and 97 percent of the jobs. Many farm employers file several applications; fewer than 10,000 US farm employers have H-2A workers. The US has 110,000 agricultural establishments registered with state unemployment insurance agencies (NAICS 11), and the 2017 Census of Agriculture reported that over 500,000 farms had hired farm labor.

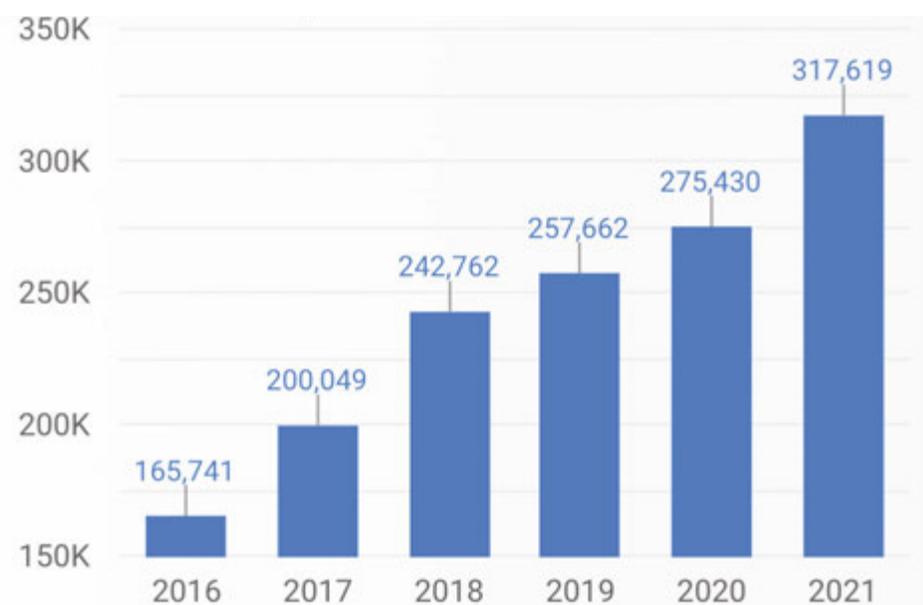
Farm employers apply for certification at least 45 days before they need workers. H-2A applications peak in the January-March quarter, when 37 percent of jobs are certified.

Seven of the 10 largest H-2A employers were FLCs, led by California-based Fresh Harvest with 6,100 certifications, two were associations including the NCGA with 10,900 certifications, and one was a farmer, Zirkle Fruit with 2,900 certifications.

States

Five states accounted for 51 percent of H-2A job certifications in FY21, led by Florida with 44,700, Georgia with 35,200, California with 33,300, Washington with 26,700, and North Carolina with 23,500. Almost 87 percent of the job offers were for crop farm laborers, followed by 6.4 percent for agricultural equipment operators, 4.2 percent for animal workers, and 1.1 percent for construction laborers.

The Number of Certified H-2A Jobs Almost Doubled Between FY16 and FY21



DOL Certified 317,600 H-2A Jobs in FY21, Including 51 Percent in 5 States

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DOL

OFFICE OF FOREIGN LABOR CERTIFICATION

H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program –
Selected Statistics, Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 EOY

Applications Received¹

FYTD	Q1 (Oct-Dec)	Q2 (Jan-Mar)	Q3 (Apr-Jun)	Q4 (Jul-Sept)	% Change FY 2020
16,546	4,556	6,453	3,293	2,072	17.1%

Applications Processed

Determination	FYTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total Processed	16,334	2,731	7,548	3,409	2,646
- Certified	15,619	2,568	7,326	3,234	2,491
- Denied	373	84	109	92	88
- Withdrawn	342	79	113	83	67
Positions Requested	330,486	51,396	120,824	85,675	72,591
Positions Certified	317,619	48,926	117,009	82,170	69,514
Processed Timely²	97.0%	97.5%	97.0%	97.2%	97.4%

Review of Positions Certified FY 2021 EOY
(% of total certified FY 2021 EOY)

Top 10 States of Employment	Florida	44,706	14.1%
	Georgia	35,205	11.1%
	California	32,333	10.2%
	Washington	28,727	9.0%
	North Carolina	23,479	7.4%
	Louisiana	12,473	3.9%
	Michigan	11,376	3.6%
	Arizona	10,842	3.4%
	New York	9,192	2.9%
	Texas	8,553	2.7%
Farmers and Laborers, Crop	274,939	86.6%	
Agri. Equip. Operators	20,308	6.4%	

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