

Rural Migration News

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RURAL AMERICA

CALIFORNIA: WATER, PEOPLE

California experienced its driest three months on record between January and March 2022, prompting new restrictions on water use. The state’s snowpack was 20 percent of normal in May 2022, Shasta Lake was 40 percent full, and Lake Oroville was 55 percent full. The snowpack was 200 percent of normal in 1983.

There are several ways to think about California’s water. In total

flows, about half of the state’s water usage is environmental, meaning that water flows via rivers into the ocean. The other half of the state’s water is used by agriculture (40 percent) and people and businesses (20 percent). Most of the water used by people is for yards.

California’s “first in time, first in right” water system gives senior water rights to the first people who put available water to beneficial use. Henry Miller, the Cattle King of California, acquired over a million acres

of land along the San Joaquin River for a cattle empire on the western side of the Central Valley in the 19th century, which gave him senior rights to the river’s water.

During the 1930s, the US Bureau of Reclamation diverted San Joaquin River water from the northern to the southern side of the valley, and compensated the water users who relied on San Joaquin River water with Sacramento River water. The northern valley water users who received Sacramento River water

could get San Joaquin River water in dry years, since they had senior water rights.

These “exchange contractors” are entitled to 875,000-acre feet of water a year. Until 2014, they always received Sacramento River water, but when drought reduced deliveries to the Friant district in the southern valley in order to deliver water to the northern valley, Friant sued the US Bureau of Reclamation.

Governor Newsom supports a \$16 million- and 44-mile-long tunnel to convey water from the Sacramento River around and under the Delta to ensure that more winter rain is moved south in ways that protect Delta fish and other wildlife.

Warmer and drier weather prompt farmers and homeowners to irrigate more. Farmers planted less rice and other water-intensive crops, and some cities banned lawn irrigation.

California has over two million wells to extract groundwater, and over 10,000 additional wells are drilled each year. The 2021-22 drought prompted the state to require local groundwater sustainability agencies to approve the drilling of new wells.

California’s fire season normally peaks between July and October, when dry brush catches fire from lightning, electricity lines or human activities. The 2022 fire season began in May, with many fires spreading fast due to gusty winds. Four out of the five largest fires in modern California history occurred in the past two years, including the August Complex fire in 2020 and the Dixie Fire in 2021.

Drought affects most western states in 2022. Lake Mead near Las Vegas, the largest reservoir in the western US, was less than 30 percent full in June 2022 and approaching a surface elevation of

1,000 feet, down from over 1,200 feet in 2000. Lake Powell is less than 30 percent full.

People

The state government in 2013 predicted that California would have over 50 million residents by 2050. However, population growth slowed between 2010 and 2020, and California had fewer than 40 million residents in 2020 and lost population again in 2021, giving the state 39.2 million people in January 2022.

California has lost residents to other states each year since 2001, and a slowdown in immigration and fewer births may lead to the state’s population stabilizing at 40 million. People leaving California for other states often have less education and lower incomes, while those moving to California are often well-educated high earners. Many of those leaving California cite high housing costs.

California K-12 school enrollment dropped to 5.9 million in 2022, as young families moved to states with lower housing costs and taxes and more parents moved their children to private schools. California anticipates a \$98 billion budget surplus for 2022-23, when the state proposes to spend \$301 billion.

About six percent of California residents are Black. California was admitted to the US as a free state in 1850; a state-mandated task force in June 2022 called for “comprehensive reparations” to Black residents due to slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining and other government policies that locked Black Americans into “failing schools and over-policed communities.”

In January 2020, five percent of US workers were employed only remotely. By June 2022, about 20 percent worked remotely full time,

including 50 percent in San Francisco and a third in New York City. Covid reversed the movement of young people to cities, prompting questions about whether the march toward urbanization will continue and raising questions about what will happen to lower-skilled workers in urban hospitality industries.

San Francisco voters recalled District Attorney Chesa Boudin in June 2022. Boudin was elected in 2020 and promised to minimize penalties for minor offenses, including car break ins and open-air drug dealing. However, well-publicized shoplifting thefts from stores as well as unprovoked attacks on elderly Asian Americans fueled the push to recall Boudin.

In February 2022, SF voters recalled three school board members who kept K-12 schools closed during covid, switched admissions to Lowell High School from tests to a lottery, and tried to remove the names of the founding fathers from local schools because they owned slaves. In June 2022, the new board voted 4-3 to return to merit-based admissions at Lowell, where half of the students were Asian under test-based admissions.

San Francisco’s downtown area has been slow to recover from covid. There were about five million vacant square feet of office space in the city of San Francisco in the first quarter of 2019, and almost 20 million vacant square feet in 2022. With less than 30 percent of office workers working in person in June 2022, closed restaurants and shops may not reopen.

The Times Square neighborhood in New York City’s Manhattan generated 15 percent of the city’s economic output from 0.1 percent of the city’s land area, attracting up to 400,000 people a day. The \$2.5 billion TSX Broadway development

is a 46-story entertainment venue and luxury hotel atop the Palace Theater, which was lifted 30 feet to make room for TSX.

By summer 2022, Times Square foot traffic topped 300,000 a day as tourists returned, although the total number of tourists is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels of over 67 million a year until 2024. The Partnership for New York City says that many office workers are worried about their safety on New York City subways.

In New York City, the top one percent of earners, those who earn over \$800,000 a year, pay over 40 percent of the city's personal income taxes. Some left during covid and, if they move to states such as Florida without state and city income taxes, New York City may have to adjust to less tax revenue. New York City's population was 8.8 million in 2020 and 8.5 million in mid-2021.

Homeless

California has 160,000 homeless people, a quarter of the US total, and a median house price of over \$800,000. Sacramento is debating idealistic versus practical compassion to deal with almost 6,000 homeless residents. In 2018, a federal court prohibited the county from clearing homeless camps unless it could offer beds to the homeless.

A 1967 law closed most of California's state mental institutions, but replacement local mental facilities were never fully built. The state plans to spend \$14 billion to deal with homelessness over the next two years by adding to the stock of affordable housing, leaving unanswered the question of whether the homeless can be compelled to accept beds and mental health services.

About 56 percent of California residents own homes; only New York at 55 percent has lower home ownership rate.

California has state and local laws that permit opponents of development to delay new housing, so-called NIMBYism or not in my back yard. The state enacted laws that permit homeowners to build additional dwelling units or granny flats in their yards, relaxed regulations requiring parking spaces in developments near transit centers, and weakened regulations that generally prohibit apartment buildings in suburban neighborhoods in a bid to increase affordable housing.

Americans had \$28 trillion in home equity in spring 2022, making the value of equity in homes more than the \$24 trillion GDP. The value of home equity fell between 2005 and 2012 before beginning to increase at an accelerating pace.

President Biden says that the US lacks 1.5 million housing units, and aims to reward states and cities that allow more housing to be built. The YIMBYism movement is trying to deal with homelessness and high housing prices by increasing supply or build baby build. Livable California is the umbrella group for the NIMBYs who oppose the state taking power away from local governments to control development.

Developer Rick Caruso won more votes than Rep Karen Bass (D-CA) to replace Eric Garcetti as mayor of Los Angeles in the June 2022 primary. Many Los Angeles voters were frustrated by crime and homelessness, and some embraced the tranquility of a major Caruso project called The Grove.

MEAT AND MIGRANTS

The House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis issued a report in May 2022 that concluded meatpacking companies persuaded the Trump administration to declare meatpacking "critical infrastructure" in April 2020 so that their plants could stay open; meatpackers also tried to win protection from liability if their employees got covid. The report concluded that some 59,000 meatpacking workers got covid, and 269 died.

Some meatpackers are building or subsidizing housing for their employees, including JBS USA Holdings in Cactus, Texas, where JBS has 3,700 employees. Company housing is often more affordable but is usually tied to employment, so that those who leave the firm must vacate their housing.

Chicken

Over 90 percent of US broiler chickens are raised by farmers who contract with processing firms that provide farmers with the chicks and feed and pay them under a performance-based system that rewards farmers whose chickens grow fastest with the least feed, the so-called poultry tournament. Four firms process over half of US broiler chickens. USDA in May 2022 issued regulations that require these and other chicken processors to disclose the details of the tournament system, including where each farmer ranks.

California-based Foster Farms, with 10,000 employees and chicken processing plants in five states, was sold to private-equity firm Atlas Holdings in June 2022. Cargill and Continental Grain want to buy Sanderson Farms for \$4.5 billion but, since Continental Grain already owns chicken processor Wayne

Farms, the FTC may block the acquisition. JBS owns 80 percent of Pilgrim's Price, but abandoned plans to acquire the remaining 20 percent stake.

Costco sells over 100 million two-pound rotisserie chickens a year for \$4.99 each, producing many in a \$450 million Lincoln Premium Poultry plant in Fremont, Nebraska. In June 2022, two law firms that specialize in animal welfare and cruelty cases sued Costco, alleging that its chickens were raised by some of the 120 farmers who supply Lincoln under poor conditions in a video made by Mercy for Animals.

Smithfield is closing its 1,800-employee hog-processing plant in Vernon, California in 2023, saying that high costs made the plant uneconomical. The UFCW, which represents the Vernon plant, hopes another firm takes over the plant.

Some firms make cultured meat, beginning with an animal's stem cells from embryos or muscle and using a bioreactor to grow tissue that can be unstructured, as in chicken nuggets or hamburger, or shaped into steak and pork chops. Developing bioreactors that grow cultured meat quickly and efficiently has proved to be difficult, limiting the supply of cultured meat to consumers.

The Plant-Based Foods Association reported that sales of plant-based meat were \$6 billion in 2021, with many consumers trying them but not always buying alt-meats regularly. McDonald's is testing the Beyond Meat's McPlant burger in some regions with mixed results, contributing to Beyond Meat's falling stock price.

Rural or nonmetro counties with no towns having more than 50,000 residents gained population during

covid, as people left counties with over a million residents to work remotely. A high share of jobs in metro counties can be performed remotely, which may maintain population growth in rural counties.

LABOR, INFLATION, EDUCATION

The US labor force was 165 million in February 2020, shrank to a low of 156 million in April 2020, and was 164 million in May 2022. Employment recovered to its pre-pandemic levels of 152 million in mid-2021, but the labor force may remain smaller and grow slower due to earlier retirements and some younger workers deciding not to work for wages. The unemployment rate was 3.6 percent in spring 2022.

Some 40 million people left jobs in 2021, especially in leisure, hospitality and retail. Many were able to move to other jobs that paid better or offered better working conditions. Many workers who were 55 and older retired early.

The US had 28 million foreign-born workers in 2021, making them 17 percent of the 161 million strong US labor force. The unemployment rate of the foreign-born, 5.6 percent, was higher than the rate for US-born workers, 5.3 percent. Hispanics were half of foreign-born workers, and workers born in Asian countries a quarter of foreign-born workers. The median weekly wages of foreign-born workers, \$900, were almost 90 percent of the median wages of US-born workers, \$1,015.

Real wages are falling, prompting a quest for reasons why. The Department of Justice has begun to sue employers, alleging that they collude to suppress the wages of employees. DOJ filed six cases under the Sherman Antitrust Act in 2021 and 2022 against, for instance,

agencies that hire employees to provide in-home care to the elderly. Most DOJ antitrust cases allege that firms collude to raise prices, but analysts say that collusion to hold down wages is also harmful.

Most franchise agreements, including those of McDonald's, Jiffy Lube and H&R Block, prohibit poaching employees from another outlet; many employers require employees to sign agreements that limit their ability to quit and go to work for competitors for months or years. A seventh of US workers with low levels of education and low wages are required to sign no-compete agreements. However, states including California prohibit employers from enforcing these agreements.

NGO Fight for \$15 and a Union released a survey in May 2022 that found 85 percent of 400 fast-food workers in California were victims of wage theft. AB 257 would create a California Fast Food Sector Council to set wages and workplace standards and make franchisors to be jointly liable for the labor law violations of franchisees.

Labor contracts covering 22,000 workers at 29 west coast ports expired in July 2022, raising fears of a strike or slowdown that could aggravate inflation. Unions supported President Biden, and want him to continue tariffs on Chinese imports and requirements that government-funded projects pay union wages and use US-made components.

The US has four million large trucks and 500,000 truck drivers, including half that haul freight long distances. Self-driving trucks are on the roads in southwestern states with safety drivers, and could become robo-rigs by the end of 2023 as their AI-systems improve with experience. Labor is about 20 percent of the cost of operating a truck, so

adding \$20,000 worth of sensors to a \$200,000 truck for 24-hour operation is economically worthwhile. Humans could monitor self-driving trucks remotely and drive trucks in urban areas.

Boeing's 787 Dreamliner marked a new way to build airplanes, including shifting the construction of many parts to other companies. Boeing delivered about 1,000 787 planes, but defects emerged in 2019, including battery fires and improper connectors. Boeing's problems with the 737 Max mean that the FAA is insisting that Boeing make 787s correctly the first time rather than fix them after problems appear. As a result, Boeing is bringing the production of more parts in house and checking outside parts more carefully, highlighting the limits of outsourcing for high-tech products.

Inflation

Consumer prices increased at an eight percent annual rate in spring 2022 compared with spring 2021, reflecting higher housing and energy costs; average gas prices topped \$5 a gallon in June 2022. The Fed raised interest rates, leading to forecasts of a US recession or a shrinking economy for two consecutive quarters.

There were many analyses of why inflation is high and rising. Many Republicans pointed to the Biden administration's \$1.9 billion pandemic assistance program enacted in March 2021 that, coupled with the Fed expanding the money supply, allowed the demand for goods to exceed the supply. Some Democrats pointed to monopoly businesses that raised prices to increase their profits.

Air travel was one of the services leading inflation higher. When covid led to stay-at-home orders in March 2020, demand for air travel plummeted and airlines and airports laid off employees. Governments

provided temporary support for airline employee salaries, but airlines offered buyouts to reduce their employment. When the demand for air travel resumed faster than expected in 2022, airlines and airports were short-staffed, leading to a summer of cancellations and delays.

Proposals to reduce inflation include raising interest rates, reducing federal spending and tariffs, and increasing immigration so that more workers are available.

Productivity, or the value of economic output per hour worked, rose at a three percent annual rate between 1996 and 2004, and has been rising only one percent a year since 2010 despite computers, AI, and other new technologies. Economists are divided about prospects for faster productivity growth. Some believe that current technologies are incremental rather than transformational in the same way that electricity and the internal combustion engine created new industries. Others say that a speed up in productivity is coming.

The prospect of stagflation, a combination of inflation, rising unemployment, and low productivity, may explain the high share of Americans who believe that the US is on the wrong track. Activist Democrats are disappointed that they were unable to enact much of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda, and fear that 2023 and 2024 may be marked by a Republican-controlled Congress investigating the Biden administration.

NYU's Scott Galloway argues that economies tend toward inequality because wealthy elites gain control of governments to reduce taxes and competition. Galloway argues that, when inequality gets too extreme, there is a correction, often in the midst of war or revolution. Galloway says that most of the \$7 trillion in covid-relief spending went to

the elite, and calls a large middle class a conscious product of policy rather than a natural result of market forces.

Some public pension funds that do not have enough money to meet promises to retirees are using borrowed money to gain leverage to increase returns. The largest, Calpers with \$440 billion, plans to add leverage equivalent to five percent of its assets in July 2022 to raise its returns to seven percent.

Education

The US Supreme Court in *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982 held that unauthorized children were entitled to free public K-12 schooling. There was no federal law penalizing US employers who hired unauthorized workers until 1986, which was one of the factors cited by the USSC to require free K-12 schooling. Today, a million unauthorized children are believed to be in K-12 schools.

Democrats are perceived as the party best able to educate children, while Republicans often stress tough on crime policies. However, the closure of public schools during much of 2020 and 2021 as well as mask and vaccine mandates turned some Democrats into Republicans, especially in northeastern states.

Some 45 million Americans owe \$1.7 trillion in federal student loan debt; a third of this debt is tied to graduate education. Seven million borrowers are in default, including a third who owe up to \$10,000. About 40 percent of those who took out student loans did not graduate from college within six years, including three-fourths of those who enrolled at private and for-profit institutions. A third of outstanding student debt will likely not be repaid.

Some 80 million US adults have or had student loans, so 35 million have repaid them.

The Biden administration suspended payments and interest

on federal student loans until August 2022, saving the average borrower \$5,500 and costing the US government over \$100 billion. In June 2022, Biden announced plans to forgive up to \$10,000 of student debt for individuals who earn less than \$150,000 a year, costing the federal government about \$230 billion and benefitting mostly high-earners. Biden also cancelled \$5.8 billion in loans taken by 560,000 students who attended for-profit Corinthian Colleges, which went bankrupt in 2015.

The number of US college students fell in spring 2022, suggesting that some youth who put off going to college when instruction went online decided not to attend when in-person instruction resumed. There were about 14 million students enrolled in undergraduate programs in spring 2022, down from 15 million in 2019. Another four million students were enrolled in professional and graduate programs.

The US Supreme Court will deal with affirmative action policies at Harvard and UNC in its 2022-23 term. By looking only at the text of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, the USSC may ban race-conscious admissions policies.

H-1B

The US allows employers to hire 65,000 college-educated foreigners a year, plus 20,000 who have graduate degrees from US universities, plus an unlimited number for US nonprofits. Employers want to raise the cap on H-1B visas. They argue that, if the cap is not raised, more US tech jobs will move abroad.

Two-thirds of H-1B visas approved in FY21 went to Indian and Chinese men. Tech companies want to raise the quota, but may have to accept tighter regulation of the program,

including a requirement to offer higher wages and try to recruit US workers before being approved to hire H-1B workers.

Fewer than five percent of US tech employees are Black, which raises the question of why tech companies prefer to raise the quota for H-1B workers rather than hire more Black workers who earn STEM degrees. Many tech companies have partnered with Black universities, but they also develop tech talent in China and India that can be productive as soon as the workers arrive in the US. Black tech workers, by contrast, often wind up working for governments.

Wealth

Forbes assembled its first list of billionaires in the early 1980s, when shipping magnate Daniel Ludwig topped the list with \$2 billion (\$6 billion today). The 2022 list includes 2,668 billionaires globally, led by Elon Musk, \$220 billion, and Jeff Bezos, \$170 billion. A third of the billionaires, 735, are Americans.

The number of billionaires began rising rapidly in the 1980s as rich-world economies deregulated key industries and finance began more important than manufacturing. The tech revolution allowed entrepreneurs to become billionaires with relatively few employees at a time when low interest rates inflated the value of assets, increasing fortunes. Forbes, Bloomberg and Wealth-X maintain billionaire lists that are updated frequently.

Businesses that cater to the wealthy such as Swiss watchmakers are selling more expensive models. Almost 16 million luxury watches were sold in 2021, generating almost \$22 billion in revenue or an average \$1,375. Breitling, Rolex, Patek Philippe, and other luxury watchmakers say that their watches are more akin to jewelry rather than time keeping devices.

Journalist David Gelles says that GE CEO Jack Welch in the 1980s and 1990s legitimized the idea that the purpose of business is to make profits for shareholders rather than its employees and customers, and made GE the world's most valuable company. However, Gelles argues that GE under Welch made more profits from buying and selling other firms and acting as a bank than making goods, which left it vulnerable during the 2008-09 recession. Gelles concludes that the Welch approach can increase profits in the short term but weaken a firm in the long run.

FARM WORKERS

CALIFORNIA: SANTA MARIA, H-2A

California's minimum wage of \$15 an hour for employers with 26 or more employees is scheduled to increase to \$15.50 January 1, 2023 due to high inflation. A proposition on the November 2022 ballot would raise the state's minimum wage to \$18 an hour in \$1 increments.

Strawberries are the most labor-intensive commodity grown in California, requiring about 1.5 workers per acre to pick fields twice a week. Some 30,000 acres are planted in the fall and harvested during the spring and summer of the following year.

Workers at several Santa Maria area strawberry farms, including Manzanita Berry Farms, Sorrento Berry, and Aquistapace Harvesting, refused to work in April 2022 to support demands for higher piece rates. Similar worker demands for higher pay occurred at J&G Berry Farms (California Giant) in May 2022.

Most growers pay harvesters \$2 to \$2.50 per flat of eight one-pound

clamshells. J&G was paying \$2.15 before their workers went on strike and raised the piece rate to \$2.20 to persuade strikers to return to work. Oxnard-based Mixteco organization MICOP (Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project) helped the Mixteco-speaking workers to demand higher piece rates.

MICOP filed charges with the ALRB alleging that J&G unlawfully surveilled striking workers in May 2022. J&G in turned sued MICOP, alleging that it was acting as a labor union without filing paperwork with the ALRB.

H-2A

Adams Brothers Farming in Santa Maria was ordered by DOL to pay \$94,000 in back wages to 30 H-2A workers and \$8,000 in CMPs. Boavista Farms was ordered to pay \$43,000 in back wages and \$5,000 in CMPs, and Profresco Inc to pay \$51,000 in back wages and \$7,500 in CMPs.

The New York Times reviewed the growth of the H-2A program in the Monterey area in May 2022, attributing the upsurge to: (1) the aging of the unauthorized workers who arrived in their 20s between the 1990s and the 2008-09 recession and; (2) the sharp reduction in unauthorized newcomers. The H-2A program allows farmers to hire legal guest workers, but the hourly costs of H-2A workers are higher than for US workers (including the unauthorized), spurring efforts to develop machines to replace hand labor and accelerating imports.

Imports of hand-harvested commodities such as asparagus are rising. California had 4,000 acres of asparagus in 2020, compared with 47,000 acres in Sinaloa, Mexico, a reversal of acreages in the two areas from the 1990s. There is little economic incentive to develop machines for small acreage crops that pose difficult technical challenges because few could be sold.

PAGA

The US Supreme Court in June 2022 ruled 8-1 that arbitration clauses in employee contracts can block suits under California's Private Attorneys General Act. California is the only state with a PAGA, enacted in 2004, that allows workers to sue their employers for violations of state labor laws.

An employee signed a contract with Viking River Cruises that included an agreement to settle disputes via arbitration, but filed a class-action suit under PAGA for violations of state labor laws. The USSC dismissed the Viking PAGA suit, but said that Legislature could adjust PAGA in ways that could permit some class-action suits despite arbitration agreements. Voters may be asked to repeal PAGA on a proposition being prepared for the 2024 ballot.

Under PAGA, attorneys for workers notify the Labor Commissioner's office of the labor law violations. The Labor Commissioner has 30 days to decide whether to investigate the workers' claims, but only 16 of 1,340 PAGA claims were investigated in 2017-18.

Labor Commissioner teams reviewed 1,500 PAGA settlements, and found that three-fourths benefited primarily the attorneys who sued rather than the workers involved. PAGA attorneys received an average of over \$400,000 per settlement, while the affected employees received an average \$2,000.

Overtime

Farm employers with 26 or more workers must pay overtime to their employees on an 8/40 basis in 2022, prompting complaints from employers and workers. Employers noted that many of their employees want to work 45 or more hours a week, while workers noted that the \$1 increase in the minimum wage

means \$40 a week more for a 40-hour week but, if the workweek is cut from 45 to 40 hours, workers lose \$75. Some employers are reportedly adding second shifts with additional employees, while some workers are seeking second jobs.

Sonoma WISE (Wine Industry for Safe Employees) in May 2022 reported 6,800 vineyard employees in the county, including 6,100 who worked year-round. QCEW data find that the 200 grape vineyards in Sonoma county had average employment of 2,100 in 2021 and paid these employees an average \$940 a week. Another 100 crop support service firms employed an average 2,200 workers in 2021 and paid their employees \$880 a week.

SB 1066 would appropriate \$20 million in state funds to provide farm workers who are adversely affected by drought with \$1,000-a-month payments for three years beginning in 2023. AB 2847 would allow unauthorized workers in the state including farm workers to obtain state UI benefits. AB 2243 would require Cal-OSHA to set protection standards for outdoor workers when temperatures exceed 105F that include plans to prevent heat illness and paid rest breaks.

FLORIDA, SOUTHEAST

Christina Gamez, a bookkeeper for Los Villatoros Harvesting (LVH), in April 2022 pleaded guilty to racketeering in 2016-17 by taking H-2A workers' passports and requiring them to work for below-AEWR wages. LVH was founded by Vladimir Moreno in 2010 and recruited Mexican H-2A workers to work in Florida and other states before being dissolved in 2019.

Gamez knew that LVH charged H-2A workers in Mexico for US jobs, and used knowledge of these recruitment debts to encourage

them to work for below-promised wages in the US.

Jose Gracia launched Gracia & Sons in 2019 while the US Department of Labor was considering whether to debar Jose M. Gracia Harvesting for violations of H-2A regulations. Gracia Harvesting violated H-2A regulations in 2016, 2017, and 2018-19, and WHD moved to debar him for three years. Gracia instead agreed to pay \$69,400 in back wages, \$180,000 in CMPs, and undergo enhanced compliance oversight for three years to avoid debarment. Gracia & Sons filed an application for certification to provide workers to Melon 1, the largest US watermelon grower and shipper.

The Marin J. Corporation and its owners in June 2022 admitted that they were certified to employ about 100 H-2A workers to harvest watermelons and blueberries in Florida, but sent the H-2A workers to Kennett in southeast Missouri. Marin J. in February 2022 agreed to pay \$165,805 in back wages to 85 workers who had been housed in a former county jail in Missouri and \$75,000 in CMPs.

Governor Ron DeSantis, who may run for president in 2024, signed a package of bills aimed at combating human trafficking and illegal immigration in June 2022. DeSantis and other Republicans criticized the ICE flights that take unaccompanied minors from the Mexico-US borders to safe houses around the US before they are released to relatives in the US. Over 150,000 unaccompanied minors were released in FY21, and over 100,000 in the first half of FY22.

Georgia

Operation Blooming Onion in October 2021 charged 24 defendants, including Charles King of Kings Berry Farms and Stanley McGauley of Hilltop Packing, with trafficking H-2A workers between 2015 and 2021. The defendants, who

accounted for a fifth of the H-2A jobs certified in Georgia, allegedly received over \$200 million from their activities, which involved 70,000 H-2A workers.

Several of the defendants were ex-employees of the Georgia State Workforce Agency that helps to administer the H-2A program. Competition among H-2A recruiters led to complaints that the Georgia SWA unfairly helped the defendants.

MIDWEST, NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST

Colorado

The Agricultural Workers' Rights law, SB 21-87 enacted in June 2021, provides Colorado farm workers with overtime pay. State Department of Labor and Employment regulations call for overtime after 60 hours a week on November 1, 2022, with the threshold falling in future years to overtime after 48 hours.

Farmers with seasonal labor needs are allowed to designate their busiest 22 weeks of the year and pay overtime during these periods after 56 hours a week, versus 48 hours during the other weeks. No other state allows employers to designate particular weeks when the overtime threshold is higher.

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment issued regulations implementing SB 21-87 in June 2022 that prohibit employers from interfering "with an agricultural worker's reasonable access to key service providers at any location during any time in which the agricultural worker is not performing compensable work." Employers who provide housing cannot blocking visitor access to worker housing.

Iowa

Greene county, with 8,700 residents an hour from Des Moines, is attracting more Latinos, who are

six percent of Iowa's population. The county aims to attract Latinos already in Iowa to manufacturing

Michigan

Ex-employees of Maroa Farms and Mastronardi Produce filed a class-action suit in June 2022 alleging violations of worker safety laws and failure to pay bonuses due to ever-changing production targets. Mastronardi Produce employs 200 workers to produce tomatoes, strawberries and cucumbers in several million-square-foot greenhouses 120 miles southeast of Grand Rapids.

Nebraska

The state's unemployment rate dropped below two percent in April 2022, making Nebraska and Utah the states with the lowest rates. The US unemployment rate was 14.7 percent in April 2020, but by spring 2022 there were two vacant jobs for every jobless worker across the US, and almost four vacancies per job seeker in Nebraska.

Illinois

Billionaire Ken Griffin, the wealthiest resident of Illinois worth \$30 billion, announced that he was moving Citadel Securities to Florida, joining Boeing and Caterpillar in moving their headquarters out of Illinois. Griffin complained to Governor J.B. Pritzker, an heir to the Hyatt hotel fortune, about rising crime in Chicago.

Wisconsin

Wausau-based Bauman Farms agreed to pay \$180,000 in June 2022 to settle an EEOC suit alleging sexual harassment of female employees and retaliation against those who complained. The EEOC also alleged that Baumann had an English-only policy that discriminated against non-English-speaking Hispanic employees based on national origin.

Foxconn in 2017 promised 27,000 resident Mount Pleasant that the Wisconsin Valley Science and Technology Park would employ 13,000 workers to build flat-panel screens. Government funds expanded I-94 and over \$300 million in bonds were sold to provide water, sewer and other infrastructure. Foxconn employed fewer than 600 employees at the site at the end of 2020.

Texas

Texas has a 1,254-mile border with Mexico, and Republican Governor Greg Abbott in 2022 took increasingly aggressive action to deter unauthorized entries. Almost 130,000 unauthorized migrants were found just inside US borders in Texas in March 2022.

The state government aims to reduce unauthorized entries by arresting migrants for trespassing. In April 2022, the governor ordered state officials to inspect all commercial vehicles arriving from Mexico, leading to a queue of hundreds of trucks waiting in Mexico to enter the US. The governors of Mexican states bordering Texas agreed to take steps to reduce illegal migration and enhance checks to ensure that Mexican trucks were safe, prompting Texas to rescind the safety checks at the US border. The federal government also inspects trucks arriving from Mexico.

The Democratic primary election in May 2022 featured a battle in the 28th district between incumbent Rep Henry Cuellar, who wants DHS do to more to keep out unauthorized immigrants, and an immigration lawyer. Many of the Democratic candidates for president in 2020 advocated decriminalizing illegal entry into the US, but Cuellar did not. Cuellar favors the Obama approach to unauthorized migration, that is, couple legalization with tougher border enforcement, and won the primary.

Mississippi

Five Black workers sued Harris Russell Farms in April 2022, alleging that the catfish farm did not hire all of them and instead hired H-2A workers from South Africa; the Black workers who were hired were paid a lower wage by Harris Russell Realty. A similar suit alleges that Pitt Farms also hired South African H-2A workers rather than local workers.

Maine

Maine wild blueberry growers harvested 105 million pounds worth \$0.78 a pound in 2021. Both yields and prices were up from 2020.

New York

The 2019 Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act (FLFLPA) created a board to phase in 8/40 overtime for farm workers. The board recommended phasing in overtime after 56 hours a week beginning in 2024, and requiring 8/40 overtime after 2032.

Washington

The H-2A program continues to expand in Washington. About 1,000 farm jobs were certified to be filled by H-2A workers in 2009, and 29,000 were certified in 2021, equivalent to a sixth of average agricultural employment of almost 100,000 if the H-2A jobs last an average six months.

Most tree fruit-picking jobs pay piece-rate wages because it is easier to monitor worker output than worker effort when workers may be obscured in trees. Despite the prevalence of piece rates, DOL has been certifying fruit-picking jobs that offer only the AEWR because the SWA has been unable to collect reliable data on prevailing piece rates.

The SWA surveys both farmers and workers, contacting farmers registered with UI authorities who produce apples, berries, or other tree fruits, and contacts workers who

applied for UI benefits after working for an employer in these commodities. If responding employers do not employ at least 15 percent of the estimated total employment for a crop activity, such as harvesting Honeycrisp apples, the SWA does not make a prevailing piece-rate determination.

Total employment to harvest any particular variety of apples is unknown. UI employment data are for all apple growers, some of whom may also have other tree fruit, and there is no mechanism to determine what work is done by employees of labor contractors and others who bring workers to farms.

Washington's Division of Occupational Safety & Health issued emergency regulations in spring 2022 that require employers to provide paid 10-minute cool down breaks every two hours when temperatures exceed 89F between June and September. Employers must also provide at least a quart of water an hour per employee, and monitor workers for signs of heat illness. Growers say that most tree fruit cannot be harvested when temperatures exceed 90F because the fruit deteriorates too quickly.

World apple production rose every year until 2014, when apple production stabilized with China the largest producer. US apple producers are focusing on the fresh market. About 80 percent of Washington apples are sold fresh, and apple farmers in Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania are switching from the production of processing apples to fresh apples.

Washington apple growers sold a record 92 million boxes of fresh apples in the US in 2014, and exported 16 million boxes. However, apple exports have been falling, especially to China and India as these countries levy tariffs on US apples in retaliation for US tariffs on goods from these countries.

About 100 workers at the Washington Bulb Company (Roozen-Gaarde) went on strike in March 2022 to demand higher wages and improved working conditions. The 1,600-acre farm includes 500 acres of daffodils, 350 acres of tulips, 150 acres of irises, and 600 acres of wheat. Employees asked Familias Unidas por la Justicia, which won a contract at Sakuma Berries covering 400 employees in 2016, to help RoozenGaarde employees to negotiate a contract March 30, 2022.

Employees of Ostrom Mushroom Farm in Sunnyside in June 2022 waving UFW flags demanded “fair pay, safe working conditions, and respect.” Ostrom opened the 43-acre and \$60 million farm in 2019 to produce up to 14 million pounds a year. Ostrom says that harvest workers, who are paid about \$0.25 per pound, can pick up to 90 pounds an hour and earn over \$20 an hour.

The growing process begins with compost made from dampened straw, peat moss, sugar beets and chicken manure made in tunnels before being transferred into the 48 growing rooms, each with four 10-inch deep growing bins, to produce mushrooms in six weeks. Mushrooms can double in size in 24 hours. Ostrom employs about 300 workers, but would like to hire 20 percent more and grow mushrooms in all 48 growing rooms.

The US expects to produce 275,000 tons of sweet cherries in 2022, including two-thirds in Washington, down over a quarter from 2021 due to frosts in February and March that damaged the crop. The tart cherry crop is projected to be 230,000 tons, including two-thirds in MI.

Alaska

More wild fish are caught in Alaska than any other state, with salmon the most valuable species. Salmon spawn in fresh water, swim to and

live in the ocean for several years, and return to spawn in the stream where they were born.

The number of salmon returning between July and September varies from year to year. The chum salmon return run in the Yukon River in 2021 was a tenth of the usual million, while a record 66 million sockeye salmon returned to Bristol Bay 400 miles south. The salmon returning to Bristol Bay spend months in inland lakes before migrating to the ocean, so warming temperatures may increase the food supply for young salmon in fresh water, making them more likely to survive in the ocean and return. One of Canada’s largest salmon runs, the 10 million sockeye salmon return to the Fraser River, was less than 300,000 in 2020.

The EPA in May 2022 ruled that mining waste may not be dumped into Bristol Bay because of the threat to fish, dooming the proposed Pebble Mine that aimed to extract gold, copper and other minerals worth \$300 billion to \$500 billion.

ConocoPhillips’s Willow project in the 23-million-acre federal National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska could yield three billion barrels of oil. Environmentalists argue that if the emissions from the burning of more oil are considered, the Willow project should not be permitted. ConocoPhillips counters that if it does not extract Alaska oil, oil will be pumped from less environmentally safe areas. President Biden suspended Trump-era oil drilling leases in the 20-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge east of the NPR-A.

Alaska held a primary election in June 2022 to finish Rep Don Young’s (R-AK) term as the state’s House representative, and gave ex-Governor Sarah Palin 27 percent of the vote in a field of 48 candidates. Alaska has 735,000 residents in a state larger than Texas, California, and Montana combined.

Alaska has hundreds of wildfires each summer that are beginning sooner and burning more land. Some 400 fires were reported in June 2022, and over two million acres had burned. In 2004, a peak 6.6 million acres burned.

MEP

The Migrant Education Program provides \$375 million a year to serve a declining number of persons under 21 who crossed school district lines for farm work, some 261,000 in category 1 in 2020-21 (eligible children age 3 to 21 who resided in the state at least one day between September 1 and August 31) and 83,000 in category 2 (children aged 0 to 21 who received some MEP services in the state). States increase their MEP funding by identifying more eligible children and by serving more eligible children.

California had 71,000 or 27 percent of category 1 children, followed by 29,000 or 11 percent in Washington, 22,000 each or eight percent each in Texas and Florida, and 17,000 or six percent in Oregon; 60 percent of category 1 children are in these five states.

California had 31,300 or 37 percent of category 2 children, Oregon had 5,000 or six percent, Washington had 2,600 or three percent, and Texas and Florida 2,300 each or almost three percent; 55 percent of category 2 children are in these five states. There were sharp differences in category 2 children enrolled in MEP over time, up over five-fold in Georgia and down over 80 percent in Missouri.

The MEP recruits eligible children and obtains a certificate of eligibility signed by the person interviewed (child and/or guardian), the recruiter and a reviewer. The MEP estimates that it serves about 40 percent of eligible children in K-6 grade ages and a third of those who are in grades 7-12, a sixth of those 0-5, and 10 percent of out-of-school youth.

State allocations are based the average count of category 1 children over the previous three years plus the number of category 2 children served times 40 percent of the state's average per pupil expenditure. California received \$113 million in MEP funds in FY22; Washington \$38 million; Oregon \$25 million; Texas \$23 million; and Florida and Arkansas \$21 million each.

The MEP is one of the Big 4 federal MSFW that spend about \$1 billion a year to provide services to migrant and seasonal farm workers and their children; the others provide health, head start and job training services.

UFW; ALRB

Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) worked a day in June 2022 on Muranaka Farms, which has a UFW contract. Padilla supports the Farm Workforce Modernization Act to legalize unauthorized farm workers and make it easier for farm employers to employ H-2A guest workers.

ALRB

ALJs issued 13 decisions and the ALRB issued three decisions in 2020-21, two of which were appealed to the courts. The GC received 67 ULP charges and issued 13 ULP complaints. There was one election in 2020-21 that saw Teamsters Local 1932 certified to represent the employees of Tikun Olam Adelanto, a cannabis grower.

AB 2183 would allow unions to be certified to represent California farm workers without a secret ballot or polling place election if a majority of employees signed union authorization cards collected over one year, the so-called card-check election procedure. UFW founder Cesar Chavez insisted that the state conduct secret ballot elections to determine if farm workers want to be represented by a union to avoid

having growers sign contracts with the Teamsters union without elections.

The UFW sought card-check after losing an election at Giumarra Vineyards on September 1, 2005, when table grape workers voted 1,121 to 1,246, or 47-53 percent, against the UFW. The UFW was expecting to win because it had signed cards from over 2,000 Giumarra workers, but some of these workers apparently voted for no union. The UFW had a contract with Giumarra from 1970 to 1973, and Giumarra workers voted against the UFW in an ALRB-supervised election in 1977.

Previous card-check bills approved by the Legislature were vetoed by governors in 2010, 2011, and 2021.

AB 2183 would allow employers to be fined up to \$10,000 if they failed to provide a list of their current employees with street addresses and contact information to the ALRB after a union files a petition that shows it has at least 10 percent support among employees. The ALRB would give the employee list to the union trying to organize workers, and employers could also face fines for other violations of the ALRA. Employers who appeal ALRB orders to the courts would have to post bonds for the amounts sought by the ALRB.

Unions

The unionization efforts at Amazon, which has a million US employees, and Starbucks with 250,000 employees, diverged in 2022. Employees at 250 Starbucks restaurants with 6,800 workers petitioned the NLRB for union votes as of May 2022. Most workers voted for a union during the elections held at 150 of Starbucks's 9,000 corporate-owned restaurants, while most workers in Amazon warehouses rejected unions.

Starbucks restaurants are small. The median Starbucks restaurant that

voted to unionize had 28 employees, slightly more than the median 21 employees in all bargaining units in 2021. Amazon warehouses often have 5,000+ employees, making it harder for organizers to make personal appeals to workers.

The 8,300 workers employed at Amazon's JFK8 warehouse on Staten Island voted 2,654 to 2,131 in April 2022 to be represented by the independent Amazon Labor Union. Amazon asked the NLRB not to certify the ALU, citing actions by the ALU and the NLRB. Amazon warehouses have very high worker turnover, often over 100 percent per year, so that the workers employed under a contract that takes months to negotiate may not be the same workers as those who voted in the election. Workers at an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama appear to have rejected union representation for a second time in spring 2022.

Apple has over 270 retail stores in the US, and in June 2022 the employees of an Apple store in Townsend, Maryland voted 65-33 for a union to represent them. Apple increased minimum wages for store workers to \$22 an hour and campaigned against the union.

President Biden in February 2022 issued an executive order that requires contractors and subcontractors on construction projects that receive \$35 million or more in federal monies to sign "project labor agreements" with unions that establish wages and working conditions on the project. Federal grants, including those made to states under the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill signed in 2021, do not require project labor agreements.

Biden addressed the AFL-CIO convention in Philadelphia in June 2022, seeking to win union member support for Democrats. Almost 10 percent of 2020 voters were union members, and 55 percent of them

voted for Biden. AFL-CIO President Liz Schuler said that Biden must do more to explain what his administration is doing for working Americans.

IMMIGRATION

MIGRANTS, ASYLUM

The US had 47 million foreign-born residents in April 2022, including 11.5 million unauthorized foreigners, so that 14.3 percent of US residents were born abroad. The covid pandemic slowed inflows of legal and unauthorized foreigners in 2020, but both inflows surged in 2021-22. The number of foreign-born US residents doubled between 1990 and 2022.

The Biden administration has struggled over the past 18 months to deal with unauthorized migration. Candidate Biden promised to reverse many Trump-era policies that kept foreigners out of the US, but DHS was not prepared for the surge of unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers in 2021-22.

CBP encountered over 200,000 unauthorized migrants a month or about 8,000 a day in spring 2022. Most apprehended migrants have friends and relatives inside the US who help to pay the smugglers who guide them into the US, and then provide them with housing and support if they are released into the US.

Asylum

Refugees are persons outside their country of citizenship who say that they face persecution at home, and a government agency has agreed and designated them refugees. Asylum seekers, by contrast, are persons in another country who asked to be recognized as refugees. Most refugees are from developing countries and are in other developing countries, such as Syrians in Turkey or Venezuelans in

Colombia, while most asylum seekers are from developing countries and seeking asylum in industrial countries.

The US resettles 125,000 refugees a year, the most of any country. There is no limit on the number of asylum applicants, which topped 300,000 in FY21 as Central Americans and others crossed the Mexico-US border and applied for asylum.

In order to avoid returning asylum applicants to countries where they face persecution, immigration judges consider whether each individual faces persecution at home. Many asylum applicants are seeking higher wages and more opportunities in the US, and over 80 percent of Central American asylum applicants are rejected.

There are over a million asylum applicants in the US, and many settle in the US with or near US relatives before there is a final decision on their application, making them reluctant to leave if denied asylum. Biden reversed Trump-era policies and allowed asylum seekers to cite domestic or gang violence as reasons to seek asylum in the US. Asylum cases take an average five years to process, so migrants who are allowed to enter the US and apply for asylum can live and work legally in the US for at least several years.

Some 125,000 Cubans arrived in 1980 during the Mariel boatlift, and another 30,000 reached Florida in 1994 before the US agreed to select 20,000 Cubans a year via lottery for family unification. Haitians have been arriving by boat in south Florida after making a 700-mile trip in a week or more. The Coast Guard intercepted an average four boats a month with an average 150 Haitians each in 2022.

DHS: CBP, ICE, USCIS

CBP

Title 42, a public health measure that allowed the CBP to return two million unauthorized foreigners to Mexico to prevent the spread of covid in the two years between March 2020 and May 2022, did not end May 23, 2022 because a federal judge issued an injunction to keep Title 42 in place. The judge agreed with states that DHS did not follow correct administrative procedures for ending Title 42 and that states would be harmed by more unauthorized migrants.

Ending Title 42 is expected to increase the number of migrants encountered by CBP agents. CBP encountered over 200,000 migrants a month in spring 2022, about 8,000 a day, and expected migrant encounters to increase to up to 18,000 a day when Title 42 ends because of the large numbers of migrants waiting in Mexican border towns.

Some 1.7 million unauthorized foreigners were encountered just inside the US border in FY21, and over 1.5 million in the eight months of FY22. Border Patrol agents arrested a record 222,650 unauthorized foreigners in May 2022.

A quarter of those arrested had been caught before, so there were 178,000 unique individuals arrested. Almost 70 percent were solo adults, and Mexicans were the largest single nationality. About 100,000 of those arrested in May 2022 were expelled under Title 42.

The US Supreme Court in June 2022 ruled 5-4 that the Biden Administration can end the Migrant Protection Protocols or Remain in Mexico policy that required some asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearings. States suing to continue the MPP argued that

immigration law requires DHS to detain unauthorized migrants or have them wait in Mexico unless they are eligible for parole into the US.

The states argued that DHS was abusing its parole authority by not detaining or requiring asylum seekers to wait in Mexico, while the USSC said that the law says that DHS may return migrants.

The USSC said that “the larger policy story behind this case is the multi-decade inability of the political branches to provide DHS with sufficient facilities to detain noncitizens who seek to enter the United States pending their immigration proceedings.”

About 44,000 unauthorized foreigners who were encountered each month by CBP since Biden took office were allowed to enter the US; another 100,000 a month were expelled under Title 42. Those who enter the US often apply for asylum and join the queue of 1.7 million cases pending in immigration court.

DHS in June 2022 began to allow unauthorized foreigners who are subject to expedited removal and express a fear of returning to their home countries to be interviewed by a USCIS asylum officer. Normally, asylum officers decide whether the asylum seeker has a credible fear of returning to their home country.

Under the Asylum Officer Rule, asylum officers will make final decisions on applicant asylum claims, so that those who are rejected can be removed after an immigration judge confirms the asylum officer decision and issues a deportation order. The result may be more asylum seekers in the US. Between FY08 and FY19, over 80 percent of foreigners who claimed fear passed the credible fear test, but less than 15 percent were eventually granted asylum by an immigration judge.

Most foreigners who pass the credible fear test are released into the

US, which is one reason why the Trump Administration implemented the remain in Mexico program for asylum applicants. There are over 400,000 pending asylum applications. Migrant advocates say that the new asylum officers plan does not give applicants time to make their case, while restrictionists want all asylum decisions made by immigration judges.

There have been surges of migrants from particular countries. CBP encountered over 32,000 Cubans just inside US borders in March 2022 and is on track to encounter over 150,000 Cubans in FY22. Cubans can enter Nicaragua without visas, after which they travel to the US border, enter the US, and apply for asylum.

ICE

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency enforces immigration laws inside the US, including monitoring asylum seekers who are not detained. In an April 2022 court filing, ICE said it expects to monitor 600,000 foreigners who are in alternatives to detention by the end of 2022, meaning they would be monitored by ankle bracelet or smartphone rather than being detained.

Over 50 migrants died in June 2022 near San Antonio after a tractor trailer truck that was cloned or made to look like a regular freight truck with over 100 migrants was abandoned near I-35. Three people were arrested; the driver said he did not know that the AC unit in the trailer had stopped working. Most of those who died were from Mexico and Central America. President Biden promised to go after human smugglers, while Republicans criticized Biden for “inviting” unauthorized migrants.

Critics allege that the US is aggressively deporting Haitians, including 4,000 on 36 flights to Haiti in May 2022. Cubans, Nicaraguans

and Venezuelans cannot easily be returned to their countries of origin, while Haitians can be returned. The US provides money to the International Organization for Migration that is given to returning Haitians to restart their lives. Many Haitians are waiting in Mexico for Title 42 to be lifted so that they can apply for asylum in the US.

The USSC in June 2022 ruled that unauthorized foreigners who have expressed a credible fear of persecution at home and are detained are not entitled to a hearing every six months to determine if they should be freed, nor can they band together in a class action to seek class relief.

Sheriff Ed Gonzalez of Harris county (Houston) withdrew from consideration as ICE director in June 2022. ICE did not have a permanent director under President Trump.

USCIS

President Obama created The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals in June 2012 as a bridge to expected Congressional action to legalize most of the 11 million unauthorized foreigners in the US. However, a 2013 Senate-approved comprehensive immigration bill that included DACA was not enacted.

Some 800,000 unauthorized foreigners who arrived in the US before age 2016 and graduated from US high schools registered for DACA, which provides them with renewable residence and work visas and, in most states, driver’s licenses and financial aid for public colleges. New applications were halted by the Trump administration in September 2017, and an estimated 100,000 unauthorized youth a year who would be eligible have accumulated since.

A group of 11 persons, including six Filipinos who lived in Los Angeles, were arrested in April 2022 and charged with arranging sham

marriages with US citizens that allowed 400 foreigners to receive immigrant visas. Foreigners paid up to \$30,000 for the marriage arrangements, sometimes claiming that their spouse was abusive in order to explain why their spouse was not present at their immigration hearing.

An April 2022 Gallup poll found that 78 percent of US adults support allowing 100,000 Ukrainian refugees into the US. By contrast, 37 percent approved admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2015.

H-2A; H-2B

DOL certified 193,200 jobs to be filled with H-2A workers in the first two quarters of FY22, up 16 percent from the 166,000 jobs certified during the first two quarters of FY21 and putting DOL on pace to certify more than the 317,600 jobs certified in all of FY21.

During the first two quarters of FY21, Florida accounted for 14 percent of certifications; California 13 percent; Georgia 11 percent; Washington eight percent; and North Carolina seven percent, so that the top five states accounted for over half of all H-2A certifications. The NCGA remained the largest H-2A recruiter with almost 5,900 jobs certified, followed by California's Fresh Harvest with 3,800 jobs, California's Foothill with 3,600, and California's Elkhorn with 2,400 jobs.

California, Oregon and Washington have about half of US farm worker employment and a quarter of H-2A job certifications, suggesting that the H-2A program could grow fastest in the western states. H-2A workers are currently the highest share of all farm workers in southeastern states.

DOL's Wage and Hour Division in May 2022 reported that 735 investigations found farms with H-2A

violations in FY20 and FY21. WHD assessed \$9 million in back wages for 13,408 workers, an average \$680, and assessed \$9.5 million in civil money penalties for these violations, an average \$12,900 per investigation.

A federal judge in April 2022 upheld an earlier ruling that prevented DOL from freezing the AEWR at 2020 levels. The judge ruled that the government created the lack of FLS data to set AEWRs by cancelling the FLS, and ordered the USDA to resume the FLS. The judge ruled that DOL's proposal to freeze the AEWR fails to protect US workers from the adverse effects of H-2A workers.

Towards Justice filed suit against the Western Range Association for violating the Sherman Act by conspiring with sheep farmers to depress the wages of H-2A sheepherders, who are mostly from Peru. A similar suit was dismissed in 2017.

USDA in June 2022 announced a \$65 million pilot program to expand the pool of potential farm workers, to address challenges facing US employers seeking to hire Northern Triangle H-2A workers, and to ensure honest recruitment of H-2A workers. USDA announced a technical assistance cooperative agreement which the UFW is to inform USDA "of the challenges faced by agricultural workers and to inform development of the pilot program."

OFLC made grants totaling \$21 million to states to cover their cost of reviewing employer job orders, inspecting housing, and conducting prevailing practice and wage surveys. Most state SWAs spend their grants on job orders and housing inspections; few prevailing wage and practice studies are conducted.

WA's SWA is an exception, augmenting its OFLC grant with state funds to survey employers and workers to obtain prevailing wages and practices. Until 2018, the employer

survey relied on weighted averages, that is, multiply the employer's piece rate or hourly wage for picking a particular variety of apples by that employer's share of employment among the employers who responded.

DOL regulations require that the SWA obtain data from employers of at least 15 percent of total employment in a particular crop and activity to make a prevailing wage determination. No one knows peak, average, or total employment to prune, thin, or harvest Gala apples. In 2018, the WA SWA introduced a capture-recapture methodology used to estimate fish stocks to estimate peak employment and wages by variety of apples, cherries, and other crops.

Surveys were sent to all employers registered with the UI system in apples (NAICS 111331), 644 establishments in 2021, other noncitrus fruit (111339), 812, and non-strawberry berries (111334), 196 and several other NAICS. Some 1,258 surveys were sent in 2021, and 394 or 31 percent of employers responded.

The low response rate meant that only 10 of 118 possible crop and activities satisfy the 15 percent threshold, six in cherries and four in apples.

WA's SWA used responses from 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 to estimate the number of employers by commodity, e.g. 1,129 apple employers, including 867 with Galas and 654 with Honeycrisp, 995 with cherries, including 808 with dark red cherries, and 671 with pears, including 647 with Bartlett pears.

The SWA reported the employment of responding employers and estimated total employment for crop and activity combinations that satisfied the at least 15 percent of total employment threshold. For example, the sample employers who reported harvesting Cosmic Crisp apples had peak employment

of 2,312, which the SWA estimated was 43 percent of total Cosmic Crisp apple harvesting employment of 5,385. In the case of harvesting cherries, the sample employment of 4,813 was 17 percent of estimated total employment of 28,050.

The four apple prevailing wages established for 2021 were the hourly AEW of \$16.34, while piece rates for harvesting cherries ranged from \$0.20 to \$0.25 a pound. Employers did not report minimum productivity standards.

H-2B

There are 66,000 H-2B visas available, plus up to 57,000 more in FY22 for a total of 121,000. Adding H-2B visas in an ad hoc fashion led to a maximum 129,547 H-2B visas available in FY07.

DOL publishes data on the number of jobs certified to be filled by H-2B workers, and USCIS has published data on the number of H-2B workers approved for US employment since FY15. Almost half of H-2B workers approved in FY21 filled janitor jobs (building and grounds cleaning), followed by 12 percent in production occupations and 10 percent in farming occupations.

An EPI analysis of WHD enforcement activity between FY00 and FY21 noted that 80 percent of the 225,000 investigations of H-2B employers found violations affecting 1.8 million workers. Some 1.7 million workers were owed \$1.8 billion in back wages, an average of almost \$1,100 each. Back wages were highest in construction, an average \$1,500 per worker, and lowest in amusement and hotels, some \$500 to \$600 per employee.

The purpose of the H-2B program is to allow employers who cannot recruit US workers to fill low-skilled and seasonal jobs with foreign workers. Some businesses rely on H-2B workers, who are vulnerable being underpaid or required to

extra work because they are tied to their employers. If H-2B workers lose their jobs, they lose their right to be in the US legally.

Tying guest workers to jobs highlights a trade-off. Certification means that only particular jobs can be filled by H-2B workers, and guest workers can fill only these jobs.

SUMMIT, CANADA, MEXICO

The 9th Summit of the Americas held in Los Angeles June 8-10, 2022 was marked by controversy when Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela were not invited, prompting Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the leaders of the Northern Triangle countries to stay away.

The first Summit was held in December 1994 in Miami and ended with plans for a Free Trade Area of the Americas. The 2022 summit addressed climate change, food insecurity and migration. President Biden announced the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity to help Latin America recover from covid, and promised more aid to the countries hosting Venezuelans.

Some six million Venezuelans have left their country, including a third who are in neighboring Colombia.

The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection called on the 20 signatory countries to improve regional cooperation to assist countries hosting migrants, create new legal pathways for foreign workers, cooperate to police borders and deal with smugglers, and coordinate responses to mass migration.

Mexico said that the US promised to issue 150,000 work visas to Mexicans and another 150,000 to Central Americans in 2022.

Vice President Harris leads the Root Causes Strategy, an effort

to encourage US businesses to invest in Central America. However, CAFTA since 2004 has mostly expanded exports of apparel (half of Central American exports to the US) and bananas and coffee. Workers employed in Central America firms that export have formal jobs, meaning that employees receive at least the minimum wage of about \$300 a month and earn work-related benefits. However, most Central American workers are employed informally, working for cash wages and excluded from social safety net programs.

Critics say that the benefits of CAFTA have accrued to local elites and multinationals. With remittances averaging \$5,000 per household per year and local earnings averaging \$3,600 a year, many households are better off with a member in the US who sends remittances than with a member who works in a local apparel factory.

A caravan of 6,000 migrants, including many Cubans and Venezuelans, began to march from Tapachula near the Guatemalan border through Mexico in June 2022. Migrants are supposed to wait in Tapachula for humanitarian visas that allow them to travel freely in Mexico, but migrants in the caravan said that Mexican government processes to issue these visas were too slow.

Mexico apprehended 300,000 migrants in 2021, a year when 130,000 foreigners applied for asylum. Most of those apprehended in Mexico were seeking jobs in the US.

Canada

Canada admitted 405,000 immigrants in 2021 and plans to admit 432,000 in 2022, increasing the population of 38 million by over one percent a year via immigration. About 60 percent of the immigrants, some 250,000, are admitted because at least one member of the

family satisfies selection criteria that include age, education and skills. A quarter of Canada's immigrants are admitted to join relatives, and 15 percent are refugees and foreigners who are granted asylum.

The government is changing the Express Entry system that has governed most economic immigration since 2015. Express Entry invites foreigners to provide their personal details and receive a score based on their work experience, educational background, language skills, age and other factors. The Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada agency invites those with the highest scores to apply for immigrant visas, and issued over 100,000 invitations in 2020 and 2021.

There were over 50,000 candidates in the pools for the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP) in May 2022. The IRCC announced that additional points could be awarded to foreigners with particular skills, such tech workers who speak French.

Quebec, Canada's second-most populous province with eight million residents, enacted legislation in May 2022 that tightens the 1977 Bill 101 that requires the use of French in private businesses and when dealing with the Quebec government. The 2022 amendments cap enrollment in English-language junior colleges and require their graduates to pass a French test. Critics, including indigenous groups, say the law discriminates against the 15 percent of Quebec residents who do not speak French.

Rising home prices, an average C\$868,000 early in 2022, prompted a government proposal to restrict foreigners from buying homes in Canada. British Columbia imposed a tax on foreigners who buy real estate, but BC house prices

continued to rise, in part because many of the homes that are bought with foreign funds are purchased by Canadians on behalf of relatives abroad.

Pierre Poilievre, the "true conservative" new leader of the Conservative party, says that Canadians want more freedom, evoking some of the calls of the truckers who shut down Ottawa in February 2022 to protest covid vaccination mandates. Poilievre said that a Conservative government would repeal Canada's carbon tax.

Mexico

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador held a referendum on his presidency April 10, 2022 that saw 92 percent of those who voted approve his continuance in office; turnout was 17 percent. Polls suggest that AMLO remains popular with Mexicans but, because AMLO cannot run for re-election in the 2024 presidential election, jockeying to become the Morena Party's presidential candidate has begun.

AMLO's agenda for 2022-24 includes changes in the energy sector to increase government involvement in Pemex and guaranteeing the Federal Electricity Commission CFE at least 54 percent of the electricity market. CFE has a monopoly on supplying homes with electricity, and subsidizes the price that residents pay, but has lost many industrial customers who switched to cheaper private electricity providers.

AMLO has focused on the poor (for the good of all, the poor come first), who are a majority of Mexico's 130 million residents, and decried the ambitions of the 50 million middle-class residents, many of whom send their children to private schools. Some \$22 billion will be paid to 23 million Mexicans under 13 social programs in 2022, which the ex-director of Coneval said helped

AMLO to win votes from those who benefit from social programs.

The USTR filed two complaints in May-June 2022 under USMCA's Rapid Response Labor Mechanism alleging that Mexican workers were being denied union rights at GM plant in Silao and at a Tridonex automotive parts facility in Matamoros. USMCA requires secret-ballot elections at Mexican plants with union contracts to determine if employees want to retain the incumbent union.

Gang violence in Michoacan, a state the size of West Virginia, is displacing residents of villages in the mountains. The Jalisco New Generation cartel taxes producers of timber and avocados, prompting the creation of local self-defense forces that can lead to confrontations and violence. Peach farmers around Jerez, Zacatecas abandoned 8,000 tons of peaches in May 2022 after threats from drug cartels.

Mexico has 50,000 hectares (124,000 acres) of strawberries, including 15,000 hectares in Baja and 35,000 hectares in Michoacán and Guanajuato. About 40 percent of Mexican strawberries are exported or sold fresh in Mexico; the other 60 percent are frozen or processed in plants in Zamora and Irapuato. Driscoll's markets about half of Mexico's fresh strawberries that are exported. Mexican strawberries sold for about \$14 per four kg flat in 2021-22, meaning about \$10 a flat to the grower after marketers deduct their costs.

Mexico's 9,000 hectares of blueberries are projected to double to 18,000 hectares by 2031, when production is expected to top 180,000 tons a year. Jalisco has 3,500 hectares of blueberries, followed by 2,100 hectares in Sinaloa; production peaks between January and May. Mexico's federal labor ministry in June 2022 announced a ban on subcontracting in the avocado and berry sectors, saying that banning

the use of subcontractors in these sectors would level the playing field and raise the share of farm workers in formal jobs.

Mexico produces 3.7 million metric tons of fresh tomatoes each year, including a quarter in Sinaloa, and 10 percent each in San Luis Potosi and Michoacan. Mexico is the world's largest exporter of fresh tomatoes, sending over half of its production or almost two million metric tons of fresh tomatoes to the US each year.

Mexico has 2.1 million public school teachers, including 60 percent who teach in primary grades. Most belong to the SNTE union, one of the largest unions in Latin America.

Central America

The northern triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras send many families to the US who seek asylum due to gang violence at home. The US is trying to help northern triangle governments to reduce gang violence and promote economic development, but has expressed concerns about some government strategies, such as the mass arrests of almost 20,000 suspected gang members in El Salvador in March-April 2022.

Critics suspect that Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele made a secret truce with gang leaders to reduce violence. Bukele bought \$100 million worth of bitcoin in 2021 and made it official tender alongside the US dollar, only to see bitcoin's value drop by half in 2022. Instead of spurring investment and job creation, Bukele's bitcoin gambit may force El Salvador to default on its \$24 billion debt, which is 86 percent of GDP. A quarter of Salvadorans live abroad and remittances are 30 percent of GDP.

Caribbean

Fidel Castro promised a liter of milk for every child every day, but during

Cuba's economic crisis in 2022, Cuba lacks milk and many other food items. Cuba imports 70 percent of its food, and a combination of fewer tourists due to covid and the economic implosion of ally Venezuela means there is not enough money to import food. Milk production fell from over a million metric tons a year in 1990 to 455,000 tons in 2020.

The Cuban government is trying to promote private-sector farming, but farmers have trouble importing seeds, fertilizers and other inputs.

South America

Latin America is among the world's most unequal regions; the richest 10 percent of residents receive 55 percent of the region's income. In the early 2000s, high commodity prices allowed governments to transfer money to the poor via social programs, but these transfer programs shrank as commodity prices fell.

Militant Mapuche are attacking forestry workers in central Chile. There are 1.5 million Mapuche in 3,000 communities, and the Chilean government has promised to give them more rights and resources in a new constitution. However, some Mapuche want to move non-Mapuche off what they consider their land in La Araucania and similar traditional lands, prompting the government to deploy troops to deal with "criminals" who use freedom for Mapuche as a cover for drug trafficking and crime.

Colombia elected a leftist president in June 2022, following Chile and Peru in the march to the left in a South America battered by covid and slow growth. If Lulu is re-elected president of Brazil in October 2022, then most major South American countries would have leftist leaders who successfully convinced voters that leftism does not have to mean governments like those in Cuba or Venezuela.

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie) organized protests against inflation that shut down transport for 16 days in June 2022, blocking \$35 million in flower exports and \$32 million in banana exports. The Confederation helped to oust three governments between 1997 and 2005 by leading massive, days-long street protests that pushed the National Assembly to vote out the presidents for incapacity to govern.

EUROPE, ASIA

Many countries, especially small island states such as St Kitts, offer golden passports that provide citizenship in exchange for an investment of \$100,000 to \$1 million in the country. Several EU member states offer golden passports, including Cyprus, Malta and Portugal, and 130,000 foreigners became EU immigrants or citizens via such programs between 2011 and 2019.

Many of the foreigners who become citizens by investment are from China and Russia. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU called for an end to golden passport schemes and urged EU member states to revoke the citizenship of Russians who have been sanctioned.

There were record-breaking high temperatures in many European countries in mid-June 2022, with southern Spain recording 112F. Unlike the US, where 90 percent of homes are air-conditioned, fewer than 10 percent of homes in France and Germany are air conditioned.

Britain

Over 2,000 migrants a month crossed the English Channel and entered the UK illegally in the first half of 2022, and two-thirds of those who applied for asylum were recognized as refugees. Over 28,000 migrants arrived in small boats in 2021.

Britain plans send migrants who arrive illegally to Rwanda, whose government agreed in April 2022 to be paid L120 million (\$157 million) to finance “opportunities for Rwandans and migrants” including “education, secondary qualifications, vocational and skills training and language lessons.” Under the Rwanda plan, migrants who arrive in the UK via “unnecessary and dangerous routes” could be fitted with a GPS tag until they are removed. Migrant advocates sued, and a charter flight for migrants to Rwanda was blocked in June 2022.

The UK announced new work and residence visas for an unlimited number high-potential individuals, defined as foreigners who graduated from the top 50 non-UK universities, including 20 in the US, within the past five years. Foreign graduates can be from any country, and will get a two-year visa without a UK job offer by paying L715, or a three-year visa if they earned a PhD. Foreign students who graduate from British universities can remain for two years after graduation.

The UK in December 2021 announced that it would allow 38,000 migrants to fill horticulture jobs and 2,000 to fill poultry jobs. These migrants are admitted to the UK via five operators for horticulture and two for poultry, who will allocate them to farmers. Currently, there are four approved operators, including Concordia, Pro Force, Fruitful and AG.

Farm workers must be paid at least L10.10 per hour. The government, after finding that the presence of foreign workers “held down wages, disincentivized investment and discouraged [local] workers” from seeking seasonal farm jobs, urged farmers to improve pay and working conditions to attract local workers. A Food Strategy White Paper promises subsidies for adopting labor-saving machines and

producing more fruits and vegetables in CEA facilities that hire local workers and use more automation.

Transport for London opened the \$22 billion 42-mile Crossrail or Elizabeth line under central London in May 2022. Ridership on public transport is only 70 percent of pre-covid levels. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers called strikes that disrupted train travel in June 2022, and more labor unrest is feared as the government urges employers to restrain wage increases.

France

President Emmanuel Macron, re-elected in April 2022, saw his Renaissance party fail to maintain a majority of the seats in the 577-member National Assembly in June 2022 elections. Macron’s party won 245 seats in 2022, down from 350 in 2017 elections, which may make it hard for Macron to raise the retirement age from 62 to 65. A leftist alliance led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s France Unbowed won 131 seats and the anti-immigrant National Rally led by Marine Le Pen won 89 seats, highlighting increasing polarization.

France generates 70 percent of its electricity from 56 nuclear reactors, the highest share worldwide. The government-owned EDF in summer 2022 struggled to generate electricity for France and other European countries as aging nuclear plants went offline for maintenance. EDF aims to build 14 next-generation water reactors by 2035, but is already heavily indebted and may need an infusion of government money.

Germany

The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party entered the German Parliament after 2017 elections in part due to a backlash against the arrival of Syrian and other migrants in 2015. Polls before elections in 2021 found that a sixth of Germans

regarded immigration and integration as one of the top two issues facing Germany and tended to support anti-migrant parties such as the AfD, which lost seats in 2021 but remains in Parliament.

Before February 2022, Russia supplied over half of the natural gas and a third of the oil used in Germany, plus half of the imported coal. Much of the gas arrived via Nord Stream 1, one of a pair of \$20 billion gas pipelines under the Baltic Sea. As the Russia-Ukraine war dragged on, Germany reduced energy imports from Russia.

Germany’s policy toward Russia has been change through trade, the notion that increased trade would encourage democracy in Russia. German firms supplied the steel used to build the pipelines that brought Russian oil and gas to Germany, giving its export-oriented manufacturing sector the competitive advantage of low energy costs.

In June 2022, Russia’s Gazprom reduced gas supplies to Germany, prompting the government to restart coal-fired power plants and to offer incentives for companies to curb natural gas consumption. Germany aims to have its gas storage facilities 90 percent full by Fall 2022, up from the current half full. Christian Democrats won the largest share of the vote in two states, Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia, in May 2022.

Portugal

Fieldwork Robotics is testing a machine that can pick 25,000 raspberries in an eight-hour day, compared with 15,000 berries picked by a hand worker. There are about 135 raspberries per pound.

Russia-Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched an invasion of neighboring Ukraine. After failing to conquer Kiev and other major cities,

Russian forces regrouped in a bid to conquer the Donbas region in the east, where Russian-backed separatists held about 30 percent of the territory. Russia aims to create a land bridge in southeastern Ukraine to the Crimean peninsula, which was “given” to Ukraine in 1954 and retaken by Russia in 2014.

By June 2022, some seven million Ukrainians left their country, including half who moved to neighboring Poland. EU member states gave the Ukrainians TPS, which means they could live and work in any EU state.

Ukraine’s economy is expected to shrink by 35 percent in 2022. The last census in 2001 found 48 million people, but the population was shrinking before the Russian invasion, by some estimates to less than 40 million.

Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to recreate greater Russia by conquering Ukraine, the birthplace of Russia in the 10th century. In Putin’s view, Ukrainians are “little Russians” who would rejoin the motherland if they were not drawn westward by NATO and the EU. Putin in June 2022 compared himself to Peter the Great and said that, like Peter’s taking land from Sweden during the Great Northern War (1700-21), he was taking back Russian lands in Ukraine.

Russia’s invasion is expected to have lasting consequences, including a strengthened NATO and a Europe less dependent on Russian energy, which could slow Russian economic growth. Sanctions that reduce trade are expected to lead to plant closures and higher unemployment. The US and its allies seized \$300 billion in Russian central bank reserves, and many allies want to use this seized Russian money to rebuild Ukraine, which could cost \$600 billion.

Spain

Melilla and Ceuta are Spanish enclaves on the Moroccan coast ringed by high fences to keep out the migrants who periodically storm these fences and apply for asylum. In June 2022, some 2,000 migrants cut the fence, prompting clashes that left at least 20 migrants dead and allowed 150 migrants to enter Melilla.

Spain and the rest of Europe had record heat in June 2022, with temperatures topping 100F in many cities. Wildfires arrived early, setting the stage for a long and hot summer that could generate record fires and smoke. Huelva province, which has 6,200 acres of mostly Fortuna and Rociera strawberries, faced shortages of pickers in May-June 2022.

Turkey

Turkey did not join other countries and impose sanctions on Russia, encouraging some Russians to migrate to Turkey. Foreigners can become Turkish citizens by investing at least \$250,000 in Turkey, including in housing. Turkey threatened to block Finland and Sweden from joining NATO, prompting some NATO members to say that Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is such a flawed democracy that the country could be suspended.

Turkey’s currency has dropped toward 20 lira to \$1 as inflation rose toward 75 percent a year. The government forced the Central Bank to reduce interest rates in the belief that lower rates would stimulate economic activity.

Bangladesh

Some 200 rivers crisscross the low-lying country of Bangladesh, making flooding a regular event during monsoon rains between June and September. Half of Bangladeshi rivers flooded their banks in June 2022, inundating fields

in the country’s northeast that are the rice bowl for 170 million Bangladeshis.

China

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act that went into effect in June 2022 bans US imports of goods that are made in Xinjiang or sold by businesses with ties to forced labor programs in Xinjiang; importers must prove that their goods were not made with forced Uyghur labor. Chinese manufacturers produce a quarter of the world’s goods, and many firms in eastern China have ties to firms that produce parts in the western province of Xinjiang.

By some estimates, 10 percent of the 10 million businesses that trade goods over borders could be affected by the Uyghur Forced Labor law. Apparel and solar panels are most likely to be affected, along with many other goods that may include inputs from Xinjiang. Cotton, processing tomatoes, hops, walnuts and rare earth minerals are some of the other items produced in Xinjiang.

The US government says that over a million people from minority groups in Xinjiang have been detained over the past five years and forced or coerced into working in fields, factories and mines; China says that all labor in Xinjiang is voluntary. The Uyghur law shifts the burden of proof to US importers to prove that their goods are not associated with forced labor. Activists say that some of the US importers who have declared their supply chains to be free of forced labor have not looked hard enough.

Some global brands began to sever ties with Chinese suppliers in 2022 when they found it difficult to confirm that there was no forced labor in their supply chains. Patagonia planned to end sourcing from China after it could no longer guarantee that its suppliers there did not use forced Uyghur labor.

President Trump imposed tariffs on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods, and President Biden came under pressure to lift them during his second year in office. Some Biden advisors want to lift the tariffs to reduce inflationary pressures, while others want to keep them until China changes its trade and human rights practices.

China aims to eventually incorporate the 23 million residents of Taiwan into the mainland, and in 2022 stepped up displays of military might and put economic pressure on the island by banning particular agricultural commodities from Taiwan. The Chinese government often justifies these bans by citing the presence of banned chemicals in the products; the farmers say that there are no banned chemicals.

China's zero covid strategy became more controversial after a lockdown in Shanghai failed to stamp out infections. A quarter of Chinese residents lived in cities that were under full or partial lockdown orders in April 2022, slowing economic growth. Leader Xi Jinping, who hopes for an unprecedented third term later in 2022, has maintained China's zero covid policy and cracked down on business leaders who protested these policies.

China's zero covid strategy may lead to recession. Real estate accounts for up to a third of the Chinese economy when considering related industries such as construction and property management. Many middle-class families often buy condos as investments, hoping to benefit from price appreciation. However, in summer 2022, condo prices began falling, which could presage recession.

China has 125,000 hectares of strawberries, most in eastern provinces including Shandong, Jiangsu and Liaoning. Grower prices are 90 to 120 yuan (\$15 to \$18) per kg.

India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi won re-election in 2019 with a pledge to double India's GDP to \$5 trillion by 2024. The economy is expected to grow by almost nine percent in 2022, but most of the benefits of this growth accrued to the rich and middle class. The government is trying to hold down inflation rather than create formal sector jobs, believing that rising prices are the greatest threat to the majority of Indians who are employed in the informal sector.

India lacks a labor-intensive export-oriented manufacturing sector due to rigid labor laws and tariffs on needed inputs.

Japan

Japan had 125.5 million people in 2021, down from 126.1 million in 2020. Almost 30 percent of residents are 65 or older, and a new law requires firms to allow workers to work until 70 rather than forcing them to retire at 65.

Japan's fertility rate, the average number of babies a woman would have over her lifetime, was 1.3 in 2021, the lowest level in 16 years. Japan's fertility rate has been below 1.5 since the mid-1990s; some attribute low fertility in Japan and East Asia to an obsession with work.

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka government led by members of the Rajapaksa family tried to force the country's two million farmers to go organic by banning imports of fertilizer. As a result, production of the staple crop rice and the export crop tea fell, forcing the government to lift the ban on fertilizer imports at the end of 2021. NGO Viyathmaga developed the organic policy, and emphasized that fertilizer imports and subsidies cost \$500 million in 2020.

Farmers have long fertilized with guano and animal manure, but the

Haber-Bosch process invented in the early 1900s used high temperature, high pressure, and a chemical catalyst to pull nitrogen from the air to produce ammonia, the basis of synthetic fertilizers.

The Rajapaksas rode a wave of Buddhist Sinhalese nationalism after a civil war victory over Tamil separatists to power, and have governed Sri Lanka for most of the period since 2000. The country of 22 million borrowed to expand government and welfare services, and is now unable to pay its debts.

ANZ

Australians voted in May 2022 to replace the Liberal-National coalition government with a Labor government, giving Labor 77 of the 151 seats in the House. Labor leader Anthony Albanese promised incremental reforms and a less pugnacious style of governing and competition without catastrophe in dealing with China.

Many voters cited the rising cost of living as their top priority, while most of the Greens and independents who won seats wanted the government to do more to deal with climate change. Many of the independents are so-called teals, a blend of blue for the Liberal-National coalition's free-market policies and green for their focus on climate issues.

The Fair Work Commission raised Australia's minimum wage from A\$20.33 to A\$21.38 July 1, 2022. Award rates for 2.5 million workers establish higher minimum wages in particular sectors; the FWC required their wages to rise by at least \$40 a week. Australian farmers can hire guest workers via the WHM, Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM), and Australian Agriculture Visa (Ag Visa) programs. There were about 20,000 PALM workers in 2021-22.

New Zealand Labor PM Jacinda Ardern is celebrated abroad but

losing support at home in the face of inflation, gang violence, and persisting child poverty amidst high housing prices. Labor won a majority of the seats in Parliament in October 2020 elections, but the average house price of NZ\$1 million (\$625,000) emphasizes the unaffordability of housing.

Many of New Zealand's birds are flightless because they evolved without the mammalian predators that were introduced with colonization in the 19th century. New Zealand's government in 2016 promised to eliminate most non-native predators by 2050, a goal unlikely to be achieved, leading some to question the wisdom of pursuing the predator-free goal.

South Africa

South Africa attracts migrants from poorer neighboring countries, prompting periodic scapegoating of migrants by frustrated residents who have not benefited from economic improvements since apartheid ended in 1994. Anti-migrant activists formed Operation Dudula (Zulu for push back) to confront migrants, many of whom are street vendors.

The four million migrants are in South Africa suffered attacks in 2008, 2014 and 2016. Migrant advocates say that political leaders persuade their followers to attack migrants to hide their inability to improve conditions.

The Indian-born Gupta brothers, Atul and Rajesh Gupta, were arrested in Dubai in June 2022, accused of abetting corruption during the nine-year Zuma presidency of 2009-17; a third brother Ajul could not be found. The Gupta brothers won at least \$3.2 billion in South African government contracts, and were accused of state capture, that is, effectively controlling key ministries and state-owned firms such as electricity monopoly Eskom.

Burglars stole millions of dollars from the Phala Phala Wildlife farm owned by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in February 2020, who did not report the burglary to avoid awkward questions about why he had so much cash. The ruling African National Congress will determine whether Ramaphosa remains their leader in December 2022; Zuma allies leaked the burglary to weaken Ramaphosa.

Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth on Nelson Mandela Bay) receives water from four dams that are at dangerously low levels, creating a water crisis similar to that of Capetown in 2018. Droughts reduce water levels, but a third of the water available is lost due to old pipes that leak, in part because city officials spent money on other projects.

GLOBAL MIGRATION

World leaders signed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018, and some participated in the first International Migration Review Forum held in May 2022 to review the progress that has been made to achieve the migration-related SDG goals. The GCM was spurred by the 2015-16 Syrian refugee crisis.

Governments at the IMRF highlighted the importance of migrants as essential workers, especially in food and health care systems, and noted that remittances to developing countries were almost \$600 billion in 2021 despite closed borders and lockdowns. However, some developing countries complained that industrial countries are draining them of needed workers.

Much of the discussion focused on the problems of migrants, decrying the paucity of legal pathways for migrants seeking safety and opportunity, and calling on governments to do more to combat discrimination and xenophobia. Advocates

called for integrating migrants into the communities where they live regardless of legal status, opening more pathways for legal migration and reducing migrant vulnerabilities.

Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 calls on governments to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The discussion called on governments to offer "migrants at different skill levels and in different situations of vulnerability with opportunities for entry and stay" in order to reduce irregular migration.

Migration from less to more developed countries averaged almost three million a year between 2015 and 2020.

Democracy

Francis Fukuyama in a 1992 book argued that the decline of communism marked the end of history, suggesting that western liberal democracy would spread globally. Samuel Huntington, by contrast, argued that was a clash of civilizations between western liberal democracy and autocracies and theocracies. Fukuyama believes liberal democracy is threatened by the identarian left that favors group over individual rights and the populist and nationalist right.

Fukuyama's ideas were embraced by Davos man, the international elite who met every year in Switzerland at the World Economic Forum and embraced the free flow of goods, services, people and ideas that they thought would lead to shared prosperity and peace. Davos 2022 was held in May rather than January due to covid, and was marked by doubts that shared prosperity leads to peace after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the reluctance of many rising powers to condemn Russia.

Most WEF participants continue to believe that an interconnected world offers the best hope for prosperity and peace, and they point to climate change, inequality and other issues as highlighting the need for more global cooperation. However, the Russian-Ukraine war threatens to create new power blocs that face off against one another, impeding flows of goods, energy, capital and people.

A record \$28 trillion worth of goods were traded internationally in 2021, but there are warning signs that globalization could go in reverse. Russia could lose energy markets in Europe and become more dependent on China and other Asian countries to buy its natural resources.

Credit Suisse estimated that the world's wealth was \$278 trillion in 2022, including \$106 trillion in the US, \$64 trillion in China, \$25 trillion in Japan, and about \$14 trillion each in Germany, the UK, and France, so that 85 percent of the world's wealth was in six countries.

Over 130 nations in Fall 2021 agreed to charge corporations a minimum tax rate of 15 percent and to charge tech and other firms in the country where they earn revenue rather than where they are based, which means that France and Germany could tax Google based on revenue earned inside their countries. Google would thus pay more taxes than it does under current practices, which place its IP in low-tax countries such as Bermuda or Ireland.

World GDP was \$94 trillion in 2021. How much economic output was lost to corruption, defined as bribery, embezzlement, abuse of functions, trading in influence and illicit enrichment? The commonly cited figure that corruption reduces global GDP by two to five percent has no statistical basis. Instead, the two to five percent estimate

emerged from a 2005 World Bank study that estimated global money laundering, not corruption.

OTHER

CALIFORNIA: \$49 BILLION

California had farm sales of \$49 billion in 2020, down from \$51 billion in 2019. The most valuable commodity was milk worth \$7.5 billion; followed by almonds worth \$5.6 billion; nursery crops worth \$5.1 billion; and grapes worth \$4.9 billion.

California is projected to harvest 2.8 billion pounds of almonds from 1.4 million bearing acres in 2022, an average 2,000 pounds per acre. During the late 1990s, there were fewer than 500,000 bearing acres of almonds and production was less than a billion pounds a year, indicating that bearing acreage and production tripled. Almond yields peaked at 3,100 pounds per acre in 2020, when over 3.1 billion pounds were harvested. Fresno county has 250,000 bearing acres of almonds; Kern almost 200,000; Madera 145,000; and Merced 125,000 acres.

California is projected to harvest almost 12 million tons of processing tomatoes from 235,000 acres in 2022. Fresno has the most acreage, 63,000, followed by Yolo with 32,000 acres, Kings with 30,000, and Merced with 25,000 acres.

California has 700 certified farmers' markets. The Direct Marketing Act of 1978 allowed farmers to sell their produced directly to consumers.

More fruits and vegetables are being grown in substrate of coir, peat and perlite rather than soil, and in CEA facilities rather than open fields. CEA substrate strawberries, for example, are normally raised off the ground by three to five feet and planted in three-foot long substrate

bags placed on top of gutters that remove excess water, allowing workers to pick berries faster and with less bending.

US AG, TRADE

The US is expected to export a record \$190 billion worth of farm commodities in 2021; US farm imports are expected to be worth \$180 billion. Feed grains such as corn are expected to be a quarter of US farm exports, oilseeds such as soybeans another quarter, livestock, poultry, and meat another quarter, and horticultural products the final quarter. US horticultural exports include a quarter tree nuts such as almonds.

Half of US farm imports are horticultural products, led by \$15 billion worth of fresh fruit and \$11 billion worth of fresh vegetables for a total of \$26 billion. The US imports almost \$25 billion worth of beer, wine and spirits, and almost \$25 billion worth of livestock, poultry, and meat as well as \$25 billion worth of coffee, cocoa, sugar, and other tropical products. Mexico is expected to export \$36 billion worth of farm commodities to the US in 2021, 20 percent of US farm imports, followed by \$17 billion in farm imports from Canada.

Land

Conservation easements, promises not to develop land in exchange for tax breaks, are proliferating to fulfill the Biden Administration's 30x30 plan, which aims to conserve 30 percent of US land by 2030. The Land Trust Alliance estimates that 61 million acres were conserved via easements, outright purchases and transfers to state agencies in 2022; reaching the 30 percent goal would require over 500 million acres to be conserved.

Two-thirds of current conserved land is covered by conservation easements, which provide tax

breaks in exchange for pledges not to develop the land.

Fish

Many governments, including China, Russia, and some in the EU, subsidize their fishing fleets, while others, including many in Africa and Asia, allow foreigners to fish in their coastal waters in exchange for a fee. Subsidies to the fishing sector worldwide are estimated at over \$22 billion a year, including \$6 billion from the Chinese government to its fishing sector.

The 164-member World Trade Organization is trying to reduce subsidies for the fishing sector in order to preserve fish stocks. Advocates of reduced subsidies note that subsidized fishing fleets have incentives to fish off the coast of poorer countries and on the high seas, depleting fish stocks.

Germany's Bayer bought Monsanto for \$63 billion in 2018 and inherited 138,000 lawsuits alleging that Roundup causes cancer. Some 107,000 claims had been resolved by June 2022, when the US Supreme Court declined Bayer's appeal of a California verdict that awarded \$25 million to a plaintiff who blamed Roundup for his cancer. Bayer says that Roundup is safe and continues to sell it, but now faces more suits those who allege Roundup injured them.

FOOD, WINE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupted trade in food commodities and prompted some governments to ban exports of food and fertilizer to slow food price inflation. Russia and Ukraine are major exporters of wheat and fertilizers, and higher food prices are expected to adversely affect sub-Saharan Africans who spend 40 percent of their incomes on food, including many in Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

China is the world's largest producer and consumer of wheat. The Chinese government is committed to food security, and the smaller winter wheat crop expected in spring 2022 raised fears of further upward pressure on grain prices. India, the world's second largest wheat producer, banned wheat exports in May 2022 to limit food price increases.

Rice is cheaper in 2022 than in 2021, helping Asians who consume 80 percent of the world's rice to hold down food costs. There was a record harvest in 2021 of over 520 million tons in the major rice producers of China, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.

The FAO reported that China produced 709 million tons of fruits (232 million tons) and vegetables (479 million tons) in 2020, 38 percent of the world's 1.9 billion tons of fruits and vegetables. India produced 119 million tons of vegetables and 88 million tons of fruits and the US 43 million tons of vegetables and 23 million tons of fruits. Turkey produced 52 million tons of fruits and vegetables, Brazil 45 million tons, Mexico and Russia, 36 million tons each, and Spain 32 million.

UK-based Unilever sells over 400 food products, and wants each to be associated with a social or environmental purpose. Founder William Lever built a model company town for soap workers in northwest England; the current CEO wants each Unilever brand to have a social or environmental purpose to accompany its major use, such as Dove soap celebrating diverse body shapes.

Over 40 percent of American adults are obese. Some attribute obesity to innovations that reduced the cost of food and made most work sedentary.

Wine

World wine consumption was 236 million hectoliters in 2021, down from the 260 million hectoliters drunk in 2019. One hectoliter is 26.4 gallons, making global consumption about 6.2 billion gallons or over a gallon per person for the 5.5 billion people who are 18 and older.

The US consumed the most wine, 33 million hectoliters, while EU countries consumed 114 million hectoliters, including 25 million in France, 24 million in Italy, and 20 million in Germany. The UK consumed 13 million hectoliters, and the top five consuming countries accounted for almost half of the world's wine consumption.

World wine production was 260 million hectoliters or 6.9 billion gallons in 2021, the same as 2020, including 154 million or 54 percent in the EU. Italy, 50 million hectoliters, France, 38 million, and Spain, 35 million, accounted for almost half of 2021 wine production. Germany produced almost eight million hectoliters and Portugal seven million.

Australia produced 14 million hectoliters of wine in 2021; Chile 13 million; Argentina 12 million; and South Africa 11 million.

Some 112 million hectoliters of wine worth E34 billion (\$36 billion) was traded over national borders in 2021. Spain was the largest exporter by volume, exporting 23 million hectoliters, and France was the leading exporter by value, exporting E11 billion worth of wine. The 53 percent of wine exports that were bottled accounted for 70 percent of the value of wine exports.

The US imported 455 million gallons of wine worth \$7.5 billion in 2021, suggesting an average price of \$16 a gallon or \$3.30 a bottle. Some of the wine imported to the US is low-cost bulk wine that is blended with US wine. France and Italy were each the source of \$2.5

billion worth of wine, but Italian wine was on average much cheaper than French wine. US wine exports were worth \$1.5 billion in 2020. Global alcohol sales were \$1.2 trillion in 2021.

Napa's 46,000 bearing acres of wine grapes yielded 120,000 tons worth \$740 million in 2021, about \$6,200 a ton. Over half of the tonnage was Cabernet Sauvignon, followed by Chardonnay and Merlot.

Sean Thackrey, an autodidactic polymath or self-taught master art dealer and winemaker who made cult wines in Bolinas, California, died in June 2022. Thackrey began to sell high-priced wines that he called editions rather than vintages, buying grapes and mixing varieties to make blended wines; he compared wine-making to being an artist. Thackrey opposed terroir or the idea that fine wine is made in the vineyard and argued that winemakers make wine.

Casella Family Brands, the Yenda, Australia producer of Yellow Tail wines, announced plans in May 2022 to sell its 5,650 hectares of vineyards in South Australia and New South Wales. Australia has 146,000 hectares of vineyards that produced an average 12 tons of grapes per hectare. China's ban on Australian wine imports has reduced grape and wine prices.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported in June 2022 that human activities pumped 36 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere in 2021, raising CO₂ levels to 420 parts of CO₂ per million, up from 280 per million in preindustrial times. Carbon dioxide levels vary throughout the year, increasing as vegetation dies and decays in the fall and winter to a peak in May and then decreasing as growing plants absorb CO₂ through photosynthesis.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the third of three reports in April 2022. The August 2021 IGCC report focused on why the earth is warming, the second in February 2022 outlined the effects of global warming, and the April 2022 report laid out options to reduce emissions. Farming and forestry contribute 22 percent to greenhouse gas emissions.

The earth's temperature has risen by about 1.1C since 1850. Governments pledged to take actions to prevent the world's average temperature from rising by more than 1.5C or 2.7F above pre-industrial levels by 2050. The IGCC report concluded that current policies will not be able to keep the temperature increase below 1.5C as economic growth generates emissions faster than climate policies reduce them.

Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries experienced multi-day sand and dust storms in May-June 2022 that grounded flights and sent people with respiratory problems to hospitals. The storms result from seasonal shamal winds from the northwest that kick up dust from the Tigris-Euphrates basin and transport it to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. Desertification has made the dust storms more intense, giving Iraq over 250 dusty days a year. The Saudi-led Middle East Green Initiative aims to plant 40 billion more trees in the region to mitigate the dust storms.

China is mining and burning more coal, increasing its emissions of carbon dioxide and methane, which is 80 times more damaging than CO₂. China is the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide, accounting for a third of global emissions in 2021. China produces and consumes about half the world's coal.

Satellites detected 13 plumes that were emitting 87 metric tons of methane gas an hour in January

2022 from a Russia's largest coal mine in Rospadskya, the largest single-site source of methane emissions ever detected. The largest US methane emissions were from leaks at the natural gas storage facility at Alsio Canyon, where emissions were 50 metric tons an hour in 2015-16. Over time, methane can result in 80 times more warming of the same amount of carbon dioxide.

Despite gas prices that topped \$5 a gallon in summer 2022, the US goals of having half of all new cars that are sold be electric by 2030 and to have a carbon-neutral electricity-generation sector by 2035 look hard to achieve because of new investments in fossil fuels to reduce inflation. Congress is not willing to enact a tax on carbon or a cap-and-trade system that would require firms to buy permits to emit carbon, and there have been difficulties siting wind and solar projects and transmitting electricity from them.

Maine voters in 2021 rejected New England Clean Energy Connect, a transmission line that would bring electricity from hydroelectric plants in Canada. The US-partner, Central Maine Power, has a dismal customer service record and a history of outages. Offshore wind turbines are required to be built with US ships and crews, which raises their cost.

The USSC in June 2022 ruled 6-3 that the Environmental Protection Agency lacks the power to regulate carbon emissions from power plants. The question before the USSC was how much authority administrative agencies have to interpret the broad provisions of laws enacted by Congress.

Under the 1984 Chevron doctrine, federal courts must defer to reasonable interpretations of ambiguous statutes by federal agencies with expertise in the sector being regulated. The USSC changed Chevron in a new "major questions doctrine"

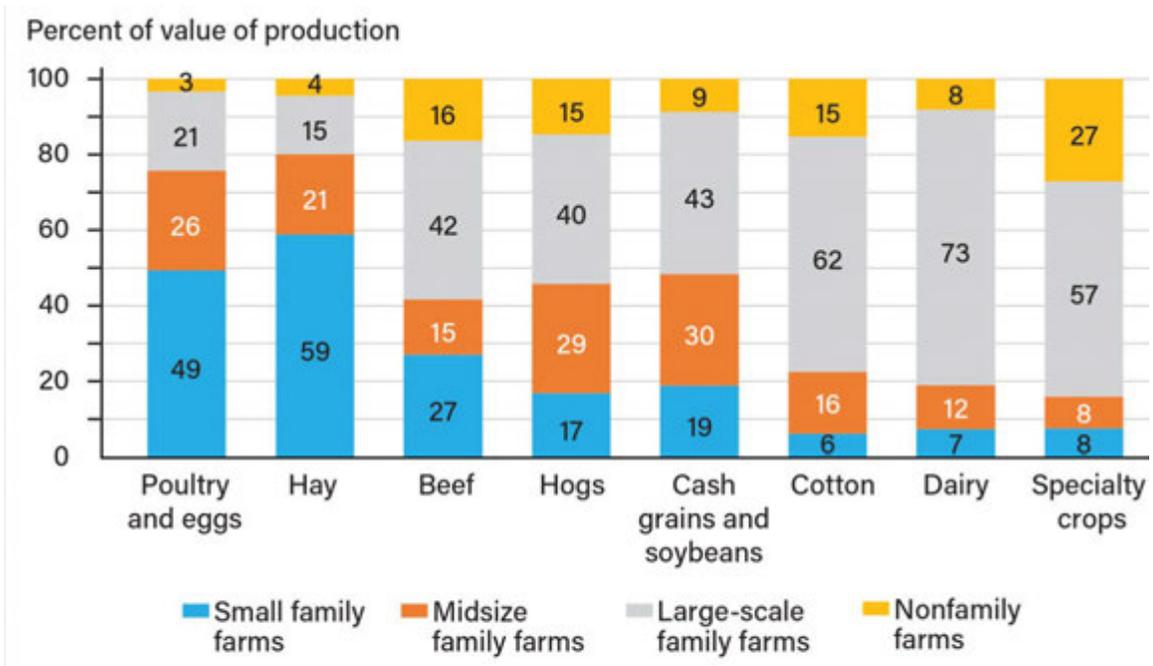
that requires Congress to provide explicit authority to allow agencies to make broad regulations.

The EPA wants to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from the power industry by 2035. Wind and solar are expanding, but not fast enough to achieve net zero emissions by 2035, prompting a new look at nuclear power plants that could be built on sites where coal-fired plants close. The US has 92 nuclear plants that produce 20 percent of US electricity and half of US clean energy including Diablo Canyon, which produces 10 percent of California's electricity. Nuclear power costs about \$50 a megawatt hour, more than the \$30 to \$40 cost of wind and solar, but is more reliable.

Antarctica has 90 percent of the world's ice and 70 percent of its fresh water in ice sheets that are on average more than a mile thick; if all Antarctic ice melted, sea levels would rise by 260 feet. Antarctica ice melts when glaciers calve into the Southern Ocean, so that speeding or slowing the movement of Antarctica's glaciers affects global sea levels.

Most US fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops are produced on farms with annual sales of \$1 million or more. Over 80 percent of specialty crops and dairy sales were from \$1 million+ farms in 2020, compared with less than a quarter of the value of production in poultry and hay.

ABOUT 85% OF U.S. SPECIALTY CROPS WERE FROM FARMS WITH ANNUAL SALES OF \$1 MILLION+ IN 2020



Notes: **Family farm** = the principal operator and people related to the principal operator own a majority of the business. **Nonfamily farm** = the principal operator and people related to the principal operator do not own a majority of the business. Specialty crops include fruits, nuts, vegetables, and nursery/greenhouse crops. Because of rounding, numbers may not add to 100. Small family farms are those that have annual gross cash farm income (GCFI) of less than \$350,000, Midsize family farms are those that have GCFI between \$350,000 and \$999,999, and Large-scale family farms are those that have annual gross cash farm income of \$1 million or more.

Source: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/charts/102992/Large_family_farms.png?v=474.6

Rural Migration News summarizes the most important migration-related issues affecting agricultural and rural America. Topics are grouped by category: Rural Areas, Farm Workers, Immigration, Other, and Resources.

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