

Rural Migration News

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RURAL AMERICA

CALIFORNIA: WATER

Record precipitation in 2022-23 led to flooding in spring 2023 as deep snow that fell in the Sierra mountains melted; some levees that were weakened by years of dry weather and animals burrowing holes in them broke. The State Water Project offered 100 percent allocations to its 29 public agencies and farmers with 750,000 acres for the first time since 2006, and the federal Central Valley Project offered 100

percent of promised water allocations for the first time since 2017.

Tulare Lake, once the largest body of freshwater west of the Mississippi, re-emerged in 2023. Water covered 168 square miles in summer 2023, reducing the acreage devoted to cotton and other crops, as snow melt from the Kern, Tule, Kaweah and Kings rivers prevented planting on the land south of Corcoran. Tulare Lake re-appeared in 1969, 1983, and 1997, which were also wet years.

California may have an El Niño weather year in 2023-24 if the trade winds that blow west off the coast of South America do not bring cold deep water to the Pacific coast of the western US. When South American trade winds are weak, the warmer water often leads to heavy rain and intense storms. El Niño years, as in 2015-16, accelerate erosion along the California coast.

Cycles of droughts and deluges may be the new normal and strain

the water infrastructure that was built for past weather patterns. Most experts call for more preparation for megafloods, better groundwater storage, and fewer water-intensive crops such as rice and alfalfa.

California is the most biodiverse US state, with coastlines, mountains and deserts that are home to the world's tallest and oldest trees and of environments and habitats that include the highest and lowest elevations in the lower 48 states.

California's population, which was almost 40 million in 2020, shrank to less than 39 million in 2022. For several decades, less-educated workers have been leaving the state, and some were replaced by immigrants. Covid and remote work encouraged even college-educated residents to move to Texas and other places with cheaper housing and lower taxes. California's median house price was over \$700,000 in 2023, compared to less than \$300,000 in Texas.

California made it easier to build accessory dwelling units on lots with single family homes, prompting some homeowners to construct ADUs or granny flats for relatives or renters. In many cities, there are five or six ADUs permitted for each new family home. ADUs of up to 850 square feet must be permitted by cities.

Legislature

California had a \$100 billion budget surplus in 2022-23, and faces a \$30 billion deficit in 2023-24. The top one percent of California taxpayers pay over 50 percent of the state's income tax, and their taxable incomes are largely tied to the performance of the US stock market, which had a down year in 2022. The state has a \$300 billion a year budget.

Governor Gavin Newsom wants to leverage the California effect, the fact that California is the largest US market for goods and services. This means that state regulations can sometimes become federal regulations, as with auto emissions and egg and pork production rules, as producers make products that satisfy California standards. California has more people than the smallest 21 states, many of which are led by Republicans, and Newsom wants state laws that regulate guns, LGBTQ rights, and school texts to set national standards.

California's minimum wage is \$15.50 in 2023. Unions led by the SEIU want a higher minimum wage of \$25 an hour for those employed by or in health care facilities, including food service and janitorial staff, covering up to 500,000 workers. Many hospitals said they could not afford a \$25 minimum wage.

A guaranteed income experiment in Stockton that paid over 100 residents \$500 a month in 2019 and 2020 found that recipients reported improved health and well-being due to the extra income. However, after two years the recipients did not have higher rates of full-time employment and the well-being benefits disappeared. Supporters of guaranteed incomes emphasized that recipients did not stop working, while detractors noted that the benefits from the extra income was short-lived.

Homeless

California has an eighth of US residents and almost a third of the 580,000 US homeless people; the number of homeless in California rose 50 percent between 2014 and 2022 to 170,000. The state has been spending \$4 billion a year on homelessness, and counties and cities more. Most homeless money goes to action plans, service

providers, and owners of hotels and motels without changing the underlying addiction and mental health issues that often lead to homelessness.

Activists say that the homeless are pushed from one place to another. Many want cities and counties to guarantee housing for the homeless (Housing First) before enticing or forcing them to seek treatment for drug or alcohol abuse. Others say that the answer is "tough love" policies to force the homeless to deal with personal problems so that they can live independent lives.

San Francisco's homeless issue may be connected to a downtown business district that has been slow to rebound after covid. Whole Foods closed a large store on the edge of downtown in April 2023 after a year due to problems with people attacking shoppers and store employees, the largest shopping mall in downtown San Francisco closed in June 2023. Elon Musk, owner of Tesla and Twitter, has become one of the city's harshest critics.

Critics say that San Francisco's toleration of property crimes and mental illness make many people feel unsafe in downtown San Francisco. Several large hotels that catered to conventions defaulted on their loans, making the future of up to 5,000 hotel rooms uncertain.

San Francisco has a \$14 billion annual budget. A 15-member task force made 111 recommendations to pay reparations to the five percent of residents who are Black, including one-time payments of \$5 million to each eligible person. California's statewide reparations task force proposed cash payments that would total at least \$500 billion, and there are calls for federal payments of at least \$14 trillion to Blacks descended from those who were enslaved (CA GDP is \$4 trillion; US GDP is \$27 trillion).

Most Blacks support reparations, while most whites, Asians, and Hispanics oppose cash payments to Blacks. Some argue that 1960s civil rights laws, affirmative action, and an expanded social safety net are reparations.

Los Angeles will host the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 summer Olympics, and some labor leaders want to raise the minimum wages of tourism workers to \$25 an hour immediately and to \$30 an hour by 2028. An estimated 36,000 workers, two-thirds Hispanics, are employed in facilities on city land such as the airport and airport hotels that would be affected.

Some 15,000 hotel workers represented by Unite Here Local 11 went on strike for three days in July 2023 to demand an increase in their minimum wage, currently \$20 to \$25 an hour. The 60 hotels affected offered an immediate \$5 an hour increase, and at least \$31 an hour by 2027.

Compton, a city of 93,000 in southern Los Angeles county, is 70 percent Latino with an all-Black city council and school board. Two-thirds of Compton residents speak a language other than English at home.

Beverly Hills 90210 has the most expensive homes in LA county and is behind only Atherton CA and Aspen CO in average home price.

MEAT: CHILDREN, SUBSTITUTES

Some 250,000 mostly Central American children under 18 arrived in the US without their families in 2021 and 2022. Many unaccompanied alien children (UACs) were released by Health and Human Services to distant relatives or

strangers from their countries of origin, some of whom put them to work in the US.

When Central American families realized that the US was releasing children under 18 and giving them work permits, many paid smugglers to take their children aged 15 to 17 to the US to work and send home remittances. Once inside the US, the children were placed in shelters until HHS found sponsors for them. Case managers say that HHS leaders encouraged them to send UACs to sponsors who were not vetted in order to empty the shelters.

HHS was warned that some UAC sponsors were trafficking children, sponsoring dozens and sometimes admitting that they expected the UACs to work. HHS says that its responsibility for UACs ends when they are released to sponsors, and that other federal and state agencies are responsible for the welfare of migrant children inside the US. The businesses where the children worked said that they do not hire workers under 18, and promised to improve their management of the temp agencies that provide them with underage workers.

Then Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) attached language to a spending bill in 2019 that prevents ICE from using HHS information to detect and remove the unauthorized sponsors of UACs, with exceptions for criminals. Critics want more HHS-ICE cooperation to monitor sponsors of UACs.

Beef

The price of beef climbed in 2023 because ranchers downsized herds in 2020 and 2021 when covid slowed the disassembly of animals in meatpacking plants. Ranchers typically raise calves and sell them to feedlots, incurring costs of \$700 per cow. Farmer profits in 2023 were about \$100 a cow, down from \$500 in 2013 and 2014, when they

received \$1,000 or more per cow sold to feedlots.

Feedlots fatten the cows before they are slaughtered at about 20 months of age. Tyson Foods, Cargill, JBS, and National Beef process 85 percent of US beef.

Iowa has 3.2 million people and 22 million hogs, most housed on fewer and larger farms that have thousands of pigs. Hog farms emit smells, attract flies, and release methane and other gases, drawing opposition from neighbors. State right-to-farm laws make it hard for neighbors to block the construction of new or expanded hog farms.

Chicken is the most consumed US protein, but the \$30 billion value of annual beef sales is double the value of annual chicken sales. Chickens reach market weight in six weeks, and hogs in six months.

Substitutes

Many firms are trying to develop plant-based or cell-cultivated meat. Bay Area-based Upside Foods and Good Meat won USDA approval in June 2023 for cell-cultivated chicken, that is, real meat made in the lab. Animal cells are placed in bioreactors and fed nutrients and oxygen to make them grow, with vegetables and plant-based proteins sometimes added.

Globally, some 350 million metric tons of animal meat worth \$1 trillion is sold each year, including almost 10 percent in the US. Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods, two meat-substitute firms, are struggling in 2023 as few consumers buy plant-based alternative meat regularly. Three-fourths of Americans say they happily eat animal meat, and fewer than five percent are strictly vegetarians (the others may eat only white meat or eat meat only occasionally). Plant-based meat costs up to \$8 a pound, at least 50 percent more than animal meat, and include chemical ingredients and salt.

Tyson Foods is one of the largest S&P 500 firms whose founding family continues to control over half of company voting shares. Tyson processes about 20 percent of US beef, chicken, and pork and experiences management turnover.

The USSC upheld California's 2018 Proposition 12 in a 5-4 decision in May 2023 that requires gestating pigs to have more room, at least 24 square feet rather than the usual 14 square feet, for the pork to be sold in the state. Residents of California consume more pork than any other state, and almost all of the state's pork is imported from the other states that sued to block implementation of Prop 12, arguing that it violates the Commerce Clause. The USSC held that, because Prop 12 did not discriminate against out-of-state pork producers, it was lawful.

LABOR, H-1B, EDUCATION

The US economy continued to add jobs in 2023 and the unemployment rate remained below four percent despite a rising labor force participation rate. Real wages declined as inflation exceeded wage increases, and many economists predicted a recession before the end of 2023.

The household survey used to generate the unemployment rate is based on interviews with 60,000 households, while the payroll survey used to estimate employment is based on responses from 122,000 employers with 42 million employees. The household survey includes both wage and salary employees and the self-employed.

Uber, which accounts for three-fourths of the US ride share market, aims to keep costs low for riders while keeping drivers independent and happy. Drivers want to see destinations before accepting riders so that they can determine if the trip will be worthwhile, but critics

worry that the result could be riders unable to reach high-crime areas.

Some 13 million workers or 10 percent of the private sector workforce is employed in manufacturing. Many US factory jobs moved to lower wage countries between 1990 and 2020. After covid supply chain disruptions and automation, some factory jobs are returning to the US.

OpenAI launched ChatGPT in November 2022, which responds to questions with humanlike language fluency. AI can spread faster and cheaper than computers because it is mostly software that takes advantage of existing hardware. Some experts expect AI to displace up to half of administrative support workers and many of those who perform routine legal services such as reading, analyzing, and summarizing. Automation often generates higher returns to capital and lower returns to labor.

Past predictions of how many jobs would be lost to new technologies have proven to be wrong. Most US workers could have some of their tasks done by AI uncertain, but they may still have jobs. By changing the focus to automating tasks rather than eliminating jobs, researchers emphasize that most jobs involve multiple tasks, and that technology can make some of them easier, as when AI makes it faster to read X-rays accurately.

Many downtown office buildings are empty and may remain so as more businesses accept worker desires for hybrid work. Tech firms are among the most permissive in allowing employees to work remotely, helping to explain high vacancy rates in San Francisco, Seattle and San Jose. Some office buildings are selling for less than they cost to build.

H-1B

Employers requested 781,000 H-1B visas in FY24; 85,000 are available

for profit-seeking employers, up from 484,000 requested for the FY23 lottery and 301,000 in FY22. USCIS found that 96,000 individuals accounted for 408,000 registrations because their names were submitted by multiple employers, suggesting efforts by employers to game the H-1B lottery and improve the chances of a particular individual obtaining a visa. USCIS is considering an increase in the registration fee from \$10 to \$215 per individual.

Education

The US Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in June 2023 against race-conscious affirmative action to favor particular applicants for admissions at universities that receive federal support. Affirmative action divides Americans. California voters rejected affirmative action in 1996, eight other states followed suit.

Voters rejected Prop 16 in 2020 to allow a return to affirmative action. California Blacks favored Prop 16, while Asians and whites rejected it; Hispanics were almost evenly divided.

K-12 schools remain cultural flashpoints on issues ranging from who can use which bathrooms to how to teach reading. For most of the 20th century, sound-it-out phonics was used to teach young children to read. However, a balanced literacy approach developed at elite universities had children guessing words from pictures. The US has over 10,000 school districts, so imposing a uniform curriculum is difficult.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are becoming flashpoints in corporations and educational institutions. DEI consultants often divide employees and students into villains and victims, and try to teach villains to change their behavior and victims to fight back. The result can be more divisiveness rather than togetherness.

The US continues to grapple with race and ethnicity. The Census defines Hispanics as persons “of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.” This raises questions such as how to treat Brazilians, who are of Portuguese rather than Spanish origin.

College students are shifting majors. The largest number of students, over 1.5 million, have business-related majors, followed by a million in health-related majors and 500,000 each in biological sciences, engineering, and computer sciences. The number of history and English majors has fallen to less than 100,000.

The share of US-born PhD economists whose parents had a graduate degree was 20 percent in 1970, and almost 70 percent in 2023. A seventh of parents who have college age children also have graduate degrees, and many of those who earn PhDs and are from families with resources seek academic jobs because they can afford to value creativity over money.

Taxes

Income taxes provide about 55 percent of US government revenue, and the 900,000 returns with incomes above \$1 million receive a sixth of US income and pay 40 percent of federal income taxes. The 10 percent of returns with incomes of \$200,000 or more pay 80 percent of federal income taxes.

Almost 45 percent of the 180 million returns report incomes of less than \$50,000; these filers earn 10 percent of US income and receive an additional five percent via various earned income tax programs. Social insurance payroll taxes provide 30 percent of federal revenue and corporate income taxes almost 10 percent.

US federal debt topped \$32 trillion in mid-2023, more than the \$27 trillion US GDP; the debt is on track to reach \$50 trillion by 2050 due to the rising cost of Medicare, Social Security, and interest on the debt. The limit on how much the federal government can borrow must be raised periodically to cover the rising debt. Republicans and Democrats cooperated to raise the debt ceiling before the US treasury ran out of money in June 2023.

Defining terms such as housing shortage is difficult. The US has 142 million housing units. Some nine million new housing units were built between 2012 and 2022 when 16 million new households formed, leaving a gap of seven million that is reduced to two million when condos and apartments are included. Some definitions of shortage include the price of housing. If the incomes of people are compared to house prices, the shortage is larger.

There are more light trucks, including pickups, vans, and SUVs, than cars on US highways. Beginning in Alaska in 1989, trucks began to outnumber cars, and by 2018 trucks outnumbered cars in all states. Trucks are more profitable for manufacturers than cars and are exempt from extra taxes applied to cars with low-fuel efficiency. The most common light trucks are SUVs, which account for almost half of new vehicles sold in the US and get an average 24 mpg.

The economy is rebounding, with demand for consumer services jumping. Airplanes are full despite higher fares, enabling US carriers to swing from a \$2.8 billion loss in 2021 to a \$1.6 billion profit in 2022. TSA screened 825 million passengers in 2019, 325 million in 2020, 585 million in 2021, and 735 million in 2022.

FARM WORKERS

CALIFORNIA: WORKER UNREST

Over 100 workers picketed Vino Farms in Healdsburg alleging unsafe working conditions, including 12 who were laid off in 2021. Vino Farms also employs H-2A workers, and was penalized by DOL in 2022 for favoring them over US workers.

WHD assessed \$99,000 in CMPs against Next Crop Inc. of Los Baños in May 2023, and \$66,000 in CMPs against the 850-acre Pebble Ridge Vineyards & Vine Estates LLC in Paicines, because Next Crop used unlicensed drivers and charged workers for transportation costs. Some \$66,500 was assessed against Noble Vineyards Management of Ukiah for failing to pay US workers the same wages as H-2A workers and not reimbursing H-2A travel costs.

Across the US, WHD conducted 880 agricultural investigations in FY22 and found almost \$6 million in back wages due to 8,300 workers.

Some strawberry harvesters in Lompoc and Santa Maria went on strike in June 2023 when their employer tried to change from a piece rate to an hourly wage with a bonus. The workers, who demanded a piece rate of \$3 a flat, soon returned to work.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta grew up at UFW headquarters in La Paz; his parents worked for the UFW. Bonta in April 2023 called for ways to identify good farm employers who comply with labor laws so that they can be rewarded.

The Linnell Farm Labor Center has 191 apartments near Visalia that charge \$513 a month for

two-bedroom apartments; tenants are legal US residents who do farm work and have low incomes. Managers of the four Tulare county farm labor centers often failed to verify the documents provided by tenants. The Tulare Housing Authority began to re-verify tenant documents in 2023, resulting in some tenants being asked to leave.

Some worker advocates alleged that the Tulare Housing Authority was re-verifying tenant documents to open beds for H-2A workers, who since 2018 may be housed in farm labor centers built with USDA Section 514 housing support. In April 2023, there were about 30 vacant units in the four Tulare centers and over 100 families on a waiting list to move in.

Huron's Latino Equity Advocacy & Policy Institute has a fleet of E-cars that residents use to get to medical and other appointments. Huron has about 6,000 residents. The Green Raiteros program was funded by a \$1 million grant from the California Air Resources Board and private foundations, and the \$150,000 annual budget is met by public and private funds. Other cities are experimenting with E-vehicles that can be rented for \$5 an hour.

Oceanside Pole produces over three million cases of vine-ripened tomatoes from 700 acres near Oceanside, picking each tomato plant 15 to 20 times with H-2A workers.

FLORIDA, SOUTHEAST

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law in May 2023 a package of bills that make the hiring, transporting, and sheltering of unauthorized foreigners felonies, require hospitals to ask patients about their immigration status, and bar state agencies from recognizing

out-of-state licenses issued to unauthorized foreigners.

Employers of 25 or more workers must use E-Verify to check new hires, which led to complaints from farmers and construction employers after the law took effect July 1, 2023. Some unauthorized workers left Florida for midwestern states in summer 2023. Wages are higher and there is more farm work in these states during the summer months, making cause-and-effect hard to determine.

DeSantis blames President Biden for out-of-control migration, and says that Florida spent over \$300 million on health care for unauthorized foreigners in 2020-21. Florida has an estimated 800,000 unauthorized foreigners.

H-2A

A bus carrying 38 H-2A workers employed by Overlook Harvesting crossed the highway in April 2023 and crashed head on into a truck, killing one worker and injuring 10. Overlook was certified to fill over 3,000 jobs with H-2A workers in FY22.

The 2016-17 Florida Citrus Harvesters Survey interviewed 210 H-2A and 40 unauthorized workers. The H-2A workers were an average 31 with eight years of schooling, while the unauthorized were an average 41 with six years of schooling. Two-thirds of each group were employed by FLCs and all were paid piece-rate wages, but H-2A workers earned 18 to 25 percent more than unauthorized workers, suggesting higher productivity.

Citrus

Florida's production of the seeded Valencia oranges used to make juice is declining due to citrus greening, while California's production of non-Valencia oranges such as navels is increasing. Florida orange production peaked at 240

million boxes or 11 million tons in 2003-04, and was 16 million boxes or 725,000 tons in 2022-23. Almost two-thirds of the oranges used to make US orange juice are imported, and the import share of orange juice is likely to rise as more Florida juice processors close.

The bright spot in citrus is tangerines, mandarins, and tangelos, whose production is rising toward a million tons a year, with almost 90 percent in California.

The US imports almost 40 million boxes of fresh citrus a year, half from Mexico, and exports 10 million boxes. Brazil produces a third of the world's oranges, China a sixth, and the EU an eighth; the US accounts for five percent of world orange production.

Tomatoes

The Florida mature-green tomato industry continues to shrink, prompting growers to ask that the 2019 Tomato Suspension Agreement be ended and duties imposed on Mexican tomato imports. Florida growers regularly accuse Mexican growers of "dumping" their tomatoes in the US at low prices; five agreements since 1996 allowed Mexican tomatoes that sold in the US above a reference price to be imported.

Growers say that Mexico provided 20 percent of US tomatoes in 1994, and almost 70 percent in 2023. Mexican growers say that they produce the vine-ripened tomatoes US consumers prefer under protected structures, while US growers refuse to innovate.

Southern Florida received record rains in April 2023, which is normally a dry month.

Georgia

Some 24 people were charged with trafficking H-2A workers in South Georgia under Operation Blooming Onion in 2021 (USA v. Patricio et al). Over 100 H-2A workers received a

deferred action status that allows them to remain and work in the US so that they can testify against the traffickers.

In April 2023, a class-action lawsuit was filed against brothers Enrique and Jose Duque and blueberry grower MBR Farms for allegedly enslaving 200 H-2A workers from San Luis Potosi in 2020 and 2021. The H-2A workers said they paid \$1,000 each for their jobs, were housed in substandard quarters, and were “rented out” to other employers, and are seeking T-visas that would allow them to settle in the US in exchange for their testimony.

Southeastern states including Georgia had a very small peach crop in 2023 due to freezes in late March. California produced 475,000 tons of peaches in 2022, followed by SC with 67,000 tons and GA with 25,000 tons.

Mississippi

DOL in June 2023 announced that MS farm employers agreed to pay over \$505,000 in back wages to 161 workers and an additional \$340,000 in CMPs for giving preferential treatment to H-2A over US workers and violating H-2A regulations. Operation Delta Force investigated complaints by US Black workers who alleged that white H-2A workers from South Africa received preferential treatment.

MIDWEST, NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST

Colorado

Colorado in 2022 established the Benefit Recovery Fund to pay UI benefits of 55 percent of their average weekly wage to laid off unauthorized workers who were employed at least 12 months in the state at an estimated cost of \$55 million a year. California Governor Newsom vetoed a similar bill in

2022 that would have cost an estimated \$200 million a year.

The Colorado River, which runs 1,450 miles from the Rocky Mountains to Mexico, supplies water to farmers and 40 million Americans in seven states. A prolonged drought reduced water levels in Lakes Mead and Powell that can collectively hold 50 million acre-feet, ten times more than Lake Shasta in California.

Under a 1922 agreement and subsequent amendments, the upper-basin states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming get 7.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water a year, the lower-basin states of Arizona, California, and Nevada get 8.5 million acre-feet, and Mexico gets 1.5 million acre-feet. However, instead of generating the expected 15 million acre-feet a year, the Colorado River has generated only 12 million acre-feet a year since 2020, so water extractions have depleted Lakes Mead and Powell.

The Imperial Irrigation District is the largest single Colorado River water user, with rights to 3.1 million acre-feet of water that is delivered via an 80-mile long canal. IID water is used primarily by about 400 farms to grow forage crops such as alfalfa and leafy green vegetables. Craig Elmore farms 7,000 acres with 40,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water, and Larry Cos farms 4,000 acres with 28,000 acre feet.

Arizona in 1968 agreed that the IID’s water rights were senior, but nonetheless relied on Colorado River water delivered via the Central Arizona Project to provide water to the suburbs of Phoenix and Tucson.

Runoff from irrigating IID fields in the Imperial Valley created the Salton Sea, California’s largest lake that lies 200 feet below sea level. As farmers irrigate more efficiently, the Salton Sea is shrinking and getting saltier, with salt levels twice that of sea water.

Six of the seven states that share Colorado River water agreed to reduce their water usage by over two million acre-feet, but California refused to give up the one million acre-feet as requested by the other states. Agriculture uses 80 percent of Colorado River water and has the most senior water rights. Arizona wants allocations to the IID and other agricultural districts reduced, which the agricultural districts resist unless they receive full compensation.

In May 2023, Arizona, California and Nevada agreed to reduce their Colorado River water deliveries by three million acre-feet through 2026 in exchange for \$1.2 billion in federal payments. Most observers say that 19th century laws and 20th century infrastructure must adjust to 21st century climate realities.

Maricopa county (Phoenix) gets more than half its water supply from groundwater, and in June 2023 announced that new construction would have to slow until alternative sources of water are found, especially in the desert fringes of metro Phoenix where the cheapest new housing is found. Maricopa county, which includes farms, uses twice as much water as New York City.

Utah’s Great Salt Lake was 4,200 feet above sea level in November 2022, having lost 70 percent of its water since 1850. The lake rose three feet by April 2023 due to one of Salt Lake City’s snowiest-ever winters with more than 87 inches and a record snowpack that will raise the lake further when it melts.

Michigan

H-2A workers who were brought to North Carolina were also sent to First Pick Farms in 2017 to pick blueberries. The 32 workers say they worked up to 12 hours a day seven days a week and lived in substandard housing, and sued First Pick for trafficking in summer 2023.

Crossroads Blueberry Farm hires 450 H-2A workers to pick its berries in West Olive.

Texas

Some 18,000 dairy cows died in April 2023 after an explosion and fire at Frank Brand's South Fork Dairy Farm in Dimmitt southwest of Amarillo that was less than a year old. The 60 employees were rescued; the cause of the fire may have been methane gas in manure storage equipment. Rapid expansion of the dairy industry on the high plains of Texas has turned the state into the third leading milk producer after California and Wisconsin.

Wisconsin

Signet Builders employed H-2A workers to construct facilities on farms in Wisconsin and Indiana, and did not pay them overtime wages for work over 40 hours a week. Some of the H-2A workers sued under the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the workers can sue because the FLSA exempts farm workers only if the work is "performed by a farmer or on a farm" and if the work "does not amount to an independent business."

The FLSA defines "agricultural" to mean "farming in all its branches," including "the raising of livestock" and "any practices performed ... on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with ... farming operations." By DOL regulation, the "erection of silos and granaries" are examples of work included in the exemption from the FLSA, and Signet argued that its buildings were similar to silos and granaries. However, the 7th Circuit said that Signet also had to show that the work was performed as "an incident to or in conjunction with" the farm's operations.

Maine

Maine considered several bills in spring 2023 that would require

farmers to pay the state's minimum wage of \$13.80 and provide overtime pay to farm workers and permit them to form unions without retaliation. Previous efforts to pass such legislation failed.

New York

The 2019 Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act grants farm workers overtime pay and collective bargaining rights. The UFW in June 2023 announced that it won the right to represent 500 H-2A workers at five NY farms using card check, including apple farms Wafler and Cahoon and vegetable grower Lynn-Ette. The Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) and the United Food and Commercial Workers represent another 125 NY farm workers.

A May 2023 report based on interviews with over 600 farm workers found that average wages were \$15.55 an hour and that a quarter of workers who were eligible did not receive overtime pay after 60 hours a week, even though farm employers can receive a refundable tax credit for the overtime wages they pay. Overtime pay will be due after 40 hours in 2023.

Almost 20 percent of the workers reported that they had a work injury that resulted in lost work time; a third of the workers who were injured were employed in dairies. Two-thirds of the workers interviewed were in Long Island and a quarter in the Finger Lakes, men were 55 percent of respondents, and over 40 percent were employed in nurseries and greenhouses. Average wages were over \$16 in Long Island, and over \$14 in upstate.

NY spent \$1 billion to build a 1.2 million square foot facility in Buffalo at a refurbished steel mill for Tesla to manufacture solar panels; Tesla pays \$1 a year in rent. Instead 3,000 workers turning out 10,000 solar panels a day, there are fewer than

2,000 employees mostly working on Tesla auto projects, another in a long line of billion-dollar busts as states offer huge subsidies for jobs.

Nevada

Casinos on the Las Vegas strip had over \$8 billion in gambling revenue in 2022, and kept more of what was bet after changing the odds to favor the house. The number of blackjack tables has been reduced to about 1,000, minimum bets at blackjack are often \$25 or \$50, and payouts for wins have been reduced. Many of the 300 roulette tables added a third zero to increase the house advantage.

Washington

The US may have a 300 million bushel apple crop in 2023, which could reduce apple prices and lead to fewer and larger apple producers. Washington produces about 60 percent of US apples, followed by Michigan and New York that produce 13 percent each.

Global apple production is about 80 million metric tons a year, half in China and five percent in the US.

The cherry crop varies from year-to-year. Some 12 million boxes of cherries were shipped from Oregon and Washington in 2022, a number expected to jump to 30 million boxes in 2023. Red cherries are typically ripe in mid-June, and yellow or Rainer cherries in early July.

The 2023 blueberry crop is expected to be larger than usual. FAO reported that 1.8 million metric tons of blueberries were produced in 2021, including 477,000 tons in China, and that 460,000 tons worth \$2.8 billion were exported. Blueberries are produced in 30 countries, Peru is the leading exporter, shipping 205,000 tons in 2021, followed by Mexico and the US, which each exported about 60,000 tons.

Beginning July 1, 2023, Washington workers will have 0.58 percent of

their wages deducted for long-term care insurance worth up to \$36,500. H-2A workers who are unlikely to benefit from Washington Cares can avoid the deduction.

UFW; ALRB

Julie Chávez Rodríguez, granddaughter of Cesar Chavez and closely linked to Kamala Harris, is President Biden's campaign manager for the November 2024 elections. She was head of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and is known for her ability to connect people to one another.

The UFW's Juan De La Cruz Pension Plan collects pension contributions from employers and provides benefits to retired workers. In January 2023, the JDLC had \$92 million in liabilities and \$81 million in assets, which means that employers with UFW contracts may have to pay extra premiums to keep the JDLC solvent.

The UFW is battling Ostrom Mushroom Farms in Sunnyside, Washington, alleging that Ostrom in June 2022 replaced US workers with H-2A guest workers at the \$60 million facility opened in 2019. In February 2023, Ostrom was sold to Canada's Windmill Farms, which renamed it Greenwood Mushrooms Sunnyside and reduced the productivity standard so that pickers must pick at least 50 pounds an hour.

The UFW represents workers at Chateau Ste. Michelle in Paterson, while Familias Unidas por la Justicia represents workers at Sakuma Farms.

In May 2023, Ostrom agreed to pay \$3.4 million or \$20,000 each to 170 workers who alleged gender discrimination before the sale. Ostrom employed 115 workers, almost 90 percent women, before replacing them with H-2A men, prompting the suit. The women who lost their jobs

said that Ostrom wanted them to work long hours and on weekends.

ALRB

AB 2183, enacted in 2022, was amended with AB 113 in 2023 to finalize two options for union recognition in California agriculture: (1) secret ballot or labor peace elections on farms that allow union organizers to take access to workers on farms and requires employers to remain neutral during union campaigns (labor peace); and (2) card-check or majority-support-petition elections that can result in a union being certified if the union collects signatures from a majority of employee over a year and submits them to the ALRB.

The ALRB has supervised six elections since 2016.

No farms signed labor peace agreements. Farm employers fear that, with the UFW one of the NGOs that is distributing USDA grant funds to farm workers, organizers could solicit worker signatures that could later be used to represent the workers on the farms where they work.

AB 2183 allows the ALRB to levy penalties of up to \$25,000 for unfair labor practices and to require employers who want to contest ALRB decisions to post bonds equivalent to pending ALRB penalties in order to appeal to the California courts.

In Gerawan Farming (49 ALRB 2) the ALRB decided 3-2 that, rather than averaging all contracts in effect during the bad faith bargaining period to determine makewhile wages and benefits, the MMC contract developed by a mediator-arbitrator offered the best evidence of what would have been negotiated if there had been good faith bargaining. Since contracts negotiated by the parties usually introduce fringe benefits that add 20 to 35 percent to the wage package, while MMC contracts normally only raise wages,

the effect of the is to reduce the makewhile owed by Gerawan by 80 to 90 percent.

Gerawan engaged in bad-faith bargaining between January and August 2013, and the GC found almost \$5 million plus interest was owed to over 4,600 employees based on the average wages and benefits found in 23 UFW contracts in effect in 2013, the contract averaging method of determining makewhile. Gerawan countered that a MMC contract effective July 1, 2013 was a better reflection of what was owed to workers. The Board agreed, and shortened the makewhile period to end June 30, 2013. Gerawan did not implement the MMC contract, and the UFW was decertified.

The Board does not usually allow a contract developed after employer bad faith bargaining to be used to calculate makewhile, reasoning that the union is weakened by the employer bad faith. However, the Board concluded that the MMC process ensures that employer's bad faith does not unduly influence the MMC contract.

The Board concluded that in future makewhile cases, there should be a search for a comparable contract and, if none is found, contract averaging should be used to calculate makewhile wages and benefits.

DOL

President Biden nominated Julie Su to be Secretary of Labor in February 2023. Su was secretary of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency from 2019 to 2021 and before that a labor lawyer who helped immigrant workers. Major employer groups opposed Su, arguing that her efforts to convert gig workers into employees and the fraud in California's UI system during covid disqualified her from leading DOL. Business groups in 2021 blocked the return of David Weill to head DOL's Wage and Hour Division.

Joe Biden, strongly supported by police, fire, and building trade unions in 2020, was endorsed by the AFL-CIO in June 2023. Hillary Clinton won 51 percent of the votes from households headed by union members in 2016 when Donald Trump attacked free trade. Biden took 56 percent of the vote from union-headed households, but most older white men voted for Trump.

The United Auto Workers began negotiations with Ford, General Motors and Stellantis in July 2023 over new contracts for 150,000 workers. The UAW has not endorsed Biden, complaining that federal subsidies for accelerating the transition to EVs has not emphasized the need to ensure that workers in battery factories and assembly plants, many in southern states, are represented by unions. There could be auto strikes in September and a strike by the Teamsters against UPS in August.

Over the past decade, the number of English-language TV series doubled from 300 to 600. The 9,000 members of the Writers Guild of America went on strike in spring 2023 to win improvements in job security. They emphasize that, as TV series get shorter, writers may find work for 10 rather than 20 episodes. The last writers' strike in 2007 reduced US economic output by an estimated \$2 billion; a strike was averted in 2017.

The Teamsters, created in 1903, and UPS, begun in 1907, have a long relationship. UPS employs a third of Teamster members who earn an average \$42 an hour after four years; part-time UPS workers earn \$20 an hour. UPS pays all health care premiums for its employees and contributes to their pension. The Teamsters threatened to strike UPS in July 2023. UPS is the only unionized parcel delivery service; Fedex and Amazon are non-union.

IMMIGRATION

IMMIGRATION: HOUSE, BIDEN

The House approved the Secure the Border Act of 2023 (HR 2) on a 219-213 vote May 11, 2023. The SBA would require DHS to construct at least 900 miles of fencing on the Mexico-US border, to hire 22,000 Border Patrol agents, to reform the asylum system and detain unauthorized foreigners and asylum seekers, to return unaccompanied minors to their families abroad, and mandate that all employers use E-Verify to check the status of newly hired workers.

The Senate is unlikely to approve the SBA, but House passage of the SBA may encourage a bipartisan effort in the Senate to develop an immigration reform bill that combines more money for border security with a path to citizenship for some unauthorized foreigners in the US. Asylum complicates the border security-legalization trade off because applying for asylum has become a side door into the US that allows foreigners to work at least several years while their cases are pending due to backlogs in the system that decides asylum applications and appeals.

The Republican-led Senate passed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 on a 62-36 vote in May 2006 that combined tougher immigration enforcement with a path to legalization and new guest worker programs. Another Senate effort in 2007 that delayed legalization until enforcement triggers or benchmarks were satisfied failed. The Senate passed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2013 on a 68-32 vote in June 2013 that was similar to the 2006 bill.

Representatives Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL) and Veronica Escobar (D-TX) introduced the Dignity Act in May

2023. Dignity would spend \$25 billion for border security, create a 12-year path to legal immigrant status for some unauthorized foreigners, update the legal immigration process, establish "humanitarian campuses" on the US border that would process asylum applications within 60 days, and expand the three H-guest worker programs. Republican leaders have said that border security must come before legalization.

Leading Republicans including FL Governor Ron DeSantis called for using the military to patrol the Mexico-US border to reduce the influx of fentanyl and other drugs. Rather than shoot drug smugglers, some say military involvement could allow the use of advanced surveillance drones and other technology to disrupt smuggling.

Biden

President Biden promised to end Trump-era migration policies, but the flood of asylum seekers at the Mexico-US border forced Biden to take a Trump-like approach and restrict unauthorized entries and asylum seeking. Beginning May 11, 2023, most foreigners who transit Mexico, enter the US illegally, and apply for asylum in the US can be returned to Mexico.

Biden promoted legislation in 2021 to provide a path to citizenship for 11 million unauthorized migrants in the US and offer visas for workers, families and visitors, but Congress did not act.

Progressive and moderate Democrats are competing to control of the party's approach to immigration. Progressives want dramatic changes, such as increasing immigration and temporary worker flows, legalizing unauthorized foreigners, and welcoming more asylum seekers and refugees. Moderate Democrats want limits on immigration and more done to curb illegal immigration and asylum seeking by

those who stay in the US several years, are found not to be refugees, but are not deported because they have established US roots.

Some observers assert that legislators want to leave some problems unsolved because they motivate voters in elections. Over 60 percent of the 11 million unauthorized foreigners have been in the US at least a decade, prompting efforts to legalize at least some of them. Senators Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Angus King (I-ME) in 2018 won 54 votes for a bill to spend more on border security and provide a path to US citizenship for Dreamers.

The Biden administration is using humanitarian parole to allow foreigners to enter the US legally and work for two years if they have a private US sponsor. Over 300,000 Ukrainians entered the US under various programs including humanitarian parole by spring 2023, and another 360,000 Venezuelans, Cubans, Nicaraguans and Haitians are expected to be paroled into the US by the end of 2023.

Another 670,000 foreigners from 16 countries have temporary protected status, so that 1.3 million foreigners are in the US but outside the normal immigration system. TPS is often renewed, so that foreigners may be in the US a decade or more with TPS. DHS in June 2023 extended TPS for another 18 months to 330,000 Central Americans. Hondurans and Nicaraguans were granted TPS in December 30, 1998, and Salvadorans on February 13, 2001.

Many NGOs and influential Democrats in Congress expressed disappointment with Biden on immigration. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) urged Biden to allow state governors to determine if their states needed more guest workers and to increase penalties for smuggling.

Older whites cast a disproportionate share of votes in elections. About

74 percent of the electorate was non-Hispanic white in the November 2022 elections when 59 percent of the population was non-Hispanic white.

DHS: MAY 11

Border

Title 42, which allowed the US to return 2.7 million migrants to Mexico without allowing them to apply for asylum beginning in March 2020, expired May 11, 2023. New rules allow the US to swiftly deport foreigners who enter the US illegally if they transited to the US via a country such as Mexico where they could have applied for asylum.

The number of migrant encounters fell from over 10,000 a day before May 11, 2023 to an average of 3,360 a day in the next two months as migrants realized they would be deported rather than released into the US. Many migrants seemed to believe DHS, which said: "Do not believe the lies of smugglers. The border is not open."

Some 2.2 million unauthorized foreigners were encountered in FY22, and 1.3 million in the first eight months of FY23.

The US returned 11,000 migrants to 30 countries in the week after May 11, 2023, but released 21,000 migrants into the US to await court dates. Many cities far from the border are struggling to deal with the migrants released into the US. New York City, which guarantees shelter to all those seeking beds, is trying to house 40,000 migrants, many of whom were bussed from border cities.

Between January 2021 and May 2023, some 1.8 million migrants who entered the US illegally and applied for asylum were allowed to remain in the US. Over two million

foreigners were returned to Mexico under Title 42 between spring 2020 and spring 2023.

Up to 1,450 migrants a day can make appointments to apply for asylum in the US using the app CBPOne, and over 30,000 did so in May-June 2023. Over 100,000 migrants are reportedly waiting for CBPOne appointments in northern Mexico.

Individuals who make appointments are allowed into the US and often given court dates that may be several years in the future. While waiting, asylum seekers can usually work and their children attend K-12 schools. Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who enter the US illegally and ask for asylum after May 11, 2023 are being returned to Mexico to apply for asylum via CBPOne or apply for asylum in Mexico.

Migrants under 18 are released into the US to apply for asylum, and more are arriving in the US. Over 400,000 people are expected to cross the roadless 70 mile Darien Gap in Panama en route to the US in 2023, including 20 percent or 80,000 children under 18. Over three-fourths of the unaccompanied children headed to the US are from Venezuela, Ecuador and Haiti.

Migrants who pass a credible fear test at the border, meaning they convince an asylum officer that they face a credible fear of persecution at home, are allowed into the US and given a year to apply for asylum, and can get a work permit 150 days after applying. Some 250,000 asylum applications were filed in FY22, bringing the total number of cases pending in immigration courts to 1.9 million, including 760,000 asylum cases. Some of the migrants who pass the credible fear test and enter the US fail to apply for asylum, especially if they are able to find a job without work authorization.

The US spends far more on immigration enforcement, some \$25 billion in FY21, than on labor law enforcement, \$2 billion. DOL's WHD investigators visit 1,000 farms a year to check for violations of labor laws.

Future flows over the Mexico-US border are uncertain. Admissionists who want more migration often stress the push factors in countries of origin that expel migrants, while restrictionists emphasize US pull factors such as US jobs that attract migrants.

ICE

The USSC in an 8-1 decision in June 2023 allowed the president to establish priorities for enforcing immigration laws. President Biden in September 2021 instructed ICE agents to focus on foreigners who are threats to "national security, public safety and border security." Several states sued, arguing that immigration law requires all unauthorized foreigners to be arrested, detained, and removed. The USSC decided that, since Congress did not appropriate sufficient funds to arrest all unauthorized foreigners, the president can set priorities for ICE.

H-2A; H-2B

DOL certified 13,500 employer applications to fill 212,000 jobs with H-2A workers in the first two quarters of FY23, up from 12,000 applications to fill 193,000 jobs with H-2A workers in the first half of FY22. Some employers file multiple applications.

DOL certified almost 372,000 jobs to be filled with H-2A workers in FY22, including 193,000 or 52 percent in the first two quarters. If the 212,000 first half certifications are 52 percent of the eventual FY23 certifications, DOL will certify 408,000 jobs in FY23.

AEWRs

Farm employers sued DOL and encouraged legislators to support a Congressional Review Act resolution to prevent DOL from implementing a new AEWR methodology that uses the OEWS to set some AEWRs for some job titles.

The farmers' suit asserts that DOL should first be required to prove that the presence of H-2A workers harms US workers before setting AEWRs, which were first established in 1960 to prevent Braceros from harming US workers.

DOL is authorized to make "an economic determination of what rate must be paid all workers to neutralize any 'adverse effect' resultant from the influx of temporary foreign workers." DOL says that the AEWR approximates the "equilibrium wages that would result absent an influx of temporary foreign workers."

DOL requires US employers who are certified to employ H-2A workers to offer and pay the average hourly earnings of field and livestock workers as determined by USDA's FLS. The farmers' suit says that USDA's FLS was not designed to determine equilibrium wages.

There was one AEWR per state for all job titles until 2023. Under the new DOL AEWR regulations, farmers describe the job and the SWA issues a job title or SOC. If USDA's FLS has average hourly earnings data for that job title or SOC, FLS earnings from the year before are used to set the AEWR for the next year. If the FLS does not have earnings for that job title, DOL's OEWS is used to set the AEWR.

The result can be a doubling of AEWRs for some "nonfarm" job titles such as truck driver and construction worker, from \$13 to \$15 to \$25 to \$30 an hour. A special concern of employers is that DOL says that workers who perform several jobs, such as driving a crew of workers

and harvesting with the crew, are entitled to the higher AEWR driver for of all hours worked.

One issue is whether H-2A workers should be considered entry-level or experienced. The H-2A program is expanding, which means that some H-2A workers are employed in US crops for the first time. However, most H-2A workers are young men in their late 20s and early 30s who have filled US farm jobs previously, which explains why they are 15 to 30 percent more productive than typical US workers in their 40s and 50s.

This means that paying H-2A workers average SOC earnings may underestimate their value to the employer if the H-2As are extraordinarily productive.

Costs

Are H-2A workers more expensive than US workers? Employers typically pay \$100 to \$250 per worker to a recruiter if needed (many H-2A workers return to the same employer year-after-year, reducing recruitment costs), and \$1,500 to \$3,500 per contract in agent or attorney costs if the employer does not have in-house staff to process H-2A applications.

A typical contract requests 20 H-2A workers, making the per worker cost \$75 to \$175 in agent or attorney fees. However, per worker agent costs can be as low as \$15 to \$35 per worker for a contract requesting 100 workers.

The cost of US government fees and processing costs is about \$750 a worker, and employers incur \$500 to \$750 in costs to house each worker at the US consulate and then provide transport to the US. Once in the US, H-2A workers earn \$120 to \$150 a day and employers pay \$10 to \$30 a day to house and transport each worker from their housing to the fields.

Over a typical six-month or 25-week contract that involves 125 to 150 days of US work, the extra costs of an H-2A worker over a US worker who is not housed or transported by the employer is about \$5,000, based on \$2,000 to get an H-2A worker to the US worksite and \$3,000 at \$20 a day for housing and food for 150 days. The wage bill for 125 days of work at \$130 a day is \$16,250, so the total costs of an H-2A worker are \$21,250.

Employers would have to pay payroll taxes on US worker earnings of \$16,250 that range from eight to 12 percent across states, reducing the \$5,000 extra cost of an H-2A worker to about \$3,500. If the H-2A worker is 20 percent more productive than the US worker, most of the extra H-2A costs disappear.

USCIS in January 2023 proposed to raise the fee for filing an I-129 petition from \$460 to \$530 for H-2A workers if the employer does not name the workers and \$1,090 if the employer names up to 25 workers; most employers do not name the workers. USCIS would also levy a \$600 per petition fee to support asylum processing.

Congress

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act (HR 4319) was re-introduced in the House in June 2023. The FWMA was approved by the House twice, but not considered by the Senate.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the H-2A program May 31, 2023. Titan Farms, with 6,000 acres of peaches, employs 800 H-2A workers, including 90 percent who worked at Titan previously. Titan's CEO warned that rising AEWRs will fuel food price inflation, and criticized DOL's regulation effective July 1, 2023 that shifts from one AEWR per state to AEWRs by job title. He also criticized rising imports of fruits and vegetables

from Mexico, urging yes to migrant workers but no to imported produce.

Employer-friendly witnesses echoed Titan and also criticized DOL's change to AEWRs by job title, while worker-friendly witnesses emphasized that AEWRs have not risen in real or inflation-adjusted terms and that there are many cases of employers abusing of H-2A and US farm workers.

Food security and competition from imports loomed large. The US has switched from being a net exporter to a net importer of farm commodities. However, the data must be interpreted carefully, since the \$100 billion in annual US horticultural imports in 2022 included \$27 billion worth fresh fruits and vegetables in 2022 and \$26 billion worth of alcoholic beverages: beer worth \$7 billion in 2022, wine \$7 billion, and spirits \$12 billion.

HR 3516 would allow DOS to waive in-person interviews for returning H-2A workers, that is, H-2A workers who had an H-2A visa previously would not have to be available at US consulates for in-person interviews.

H-2B

The H-2B program allows US employers who cannot recruit sufficient US workers to fill up to 66,000 seasonal nonfarm jobs with H-2B workers. Congressional riders have allowed the H-2B cap to increase, and some workers extend their stay in the US, so that an estimated 156,000 H-2B workers were employed in the US in 2022.

Almost half of H-2B jobs in FY 21 were in building and grounds cleaning occupations, which includes landscaping. The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security in June 2023 voted to exempt H-2B workers who are returning to their US employer from

the 66,000 a year cap and to allow H-2A workers to be employed in year-round jobs.

Signal International, a marine oil-rig company with a shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, relied on US and Indian recruiters to bring 500 Indian welders to the US to build and repair offshore oil rigs after Hurricane Katrina. The Indians paid \$20,000 each for H-2B visas that, they were promised, would be converted to immigrant visas after nine months.

There is no path from H-2B to immigrant visa. When the Indians learned that they had been tricked, they protested in March 2007. Signal enlisted ICE and tried to fire and deport the Indians who were leading the protests, but worker advocates blocked the vans that were to take them to the airport. In 2015, Signal agreed to pay \$20 million to settle the labor trafficking cases filed by the Indian workers and filed for bankruptcy.

An additional 109,000 foreign workers, often students, can be employed as J-1 Summer Work Travel lifeguards and in seasonal hospitality jobs under a DOS-run exchange program administered by private sponsors that often charge foreigners for J-1 visas.

CANADA, MEXICO

Most of the 155,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada went on a 15-day strike in April 2023, demanding higher wages and the right to continue to work more days remotely; 44,000 were considered essential and continued to work. The PSAC demanded a 13 percent wage increase over three years, but accepted the government's offer of a 12 percent wage increase over four years and two days of remote work a week.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) has since 1966 allowed Caribbean and since 1973 Mexican workers to be employed in Canada for up to eight months. Over 40,000 SAWP workers are expected in 2023.

The Agri-Food Pilot launched in 2020 allows foreign workers who are employed in year-round jobs in meat processing, greenhouses, and livestock-raising to become immigrants. The families of Agri-Food Pilot foreign workers can obtain work permits and work in any job.

Canada experienced early and intense wildfires in May-June 2023. A million acres burned in northern Alberta in May 2023, prompting the evacuation of 30,000 people, many from indigenous communities. Warming temperatures allow insects to move further north, weakening or killing trees that burn when lightning ignites dry grasses. One result is fewer long-lived trees such as black spruce and more shorter-lived and faster-growing trees such as aspen and birch.

In June 2023, fires in Quebec sent smoke south to US cities, leading to dangerous levels of small PM 2.5 particles in New York City and other US cities that can lodge in the lungs. Many areas have air quality indices that combine ozone and PM 2.5 particles. AQI ratings of less than 100 are generally safe for all, while readings over 150 are unhealthy and over 300 hazardous.

Mexico

A 2022 survey of some of the 20,000 Mexicans who were deported from the US found that half used smugglers to cross the Mexico-US border, and migrants who used smugglers paid an average \$7,000. Most were in their late 20s, had little education, and many had US relatives. Only a sixth of migrants arriving illegally from Guatemala used smugglers, and they paid an average \$4,000.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has increased the role of the military in security and the economy, giving power to a largely unaccountable entity because there is often little accountability if innocent people are killed or wounded in military operations. The military operates Mexico City's new airport, is building the Maya Train, and is in charge of collecting customs duties.

Mexico's military was the first major buyer and major user of the Israeli NSO's Pegasus software in 2011 that infects cell phones and sends the contents to monitors. It has continued to use Pegasus to monitor criminals and critics despite AMLO's 2018 promise to stop "illegal" spying. Mexico's military has a history of human rights abuses.

AMLO raised the salaries of Mexican K-12 teachers to at least 16,000 pesos (\$900) a month, which is the average salary of the 22 million workers who are enrolled in the private sector IMSS. Mexico has 2.2 million teachers in 255,500 K-12 schools.

The US is clashing with Mexico over fentanyl. The US says that Mexican gangs make fentanyl in Mexico, while AMLO says that the gangs simply turn Asian-made fentanyl into pills. Some US Republicans want to designate drug gangs as terrorist groups and have the US military destroy Mexican fentanyl labs. AMLO says that the US should promote family values to reduce drug consumption.

Fentanyl is over 100 times more potent than morphine and is responsible for two-thirds of the 100,000 overdose deaths in the US each year.

Mexico produces a third of the world's avocados, but production is growing fast in Colombia, Peru, and Kenya, the next leading producers that together account for a quarter of the world's avocados. The

world's avocados were worth an estimated \$18 billion in 2022.

Mexico exported 356,000 tons of strawberries in 2021, almost all to the US; two-thirds of the strawberries produced in Mexico are exported to the US. The US produces about two-thirds of the strawberries consumed in the country.

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele is credited with reducing the threat of gangs. An emergency was declared after a March 2022 weekend that left 80 people dead, prompting mass arrests of young men. Some 65,000 suspected gang members were arrested in 2022.

Caribbean

Puerto Rico has fewer than 5,000 farms with less than \$500 million in annual sales, half from the sale of crops led by field crops (\$75 million) and plantains and bananas (\$50 million) and half from the sale of animal products led by milk (\$170 million). Puerto Rico has about 250 dairies with almost 60,000 cows, most in the northern province of Arecibo. Coffee is grown above 4,000 feet on 13,000 acres. Rum exports, primarily to the EU and Canada, are worth \$40 million a year.

Many Haitians enter the US with H-2A or H-2B visas do not leave, while others enter the US illegally or apply for humanitarian parole under programs that allow foreigners with family members in the US to sponsor their relatives who face threats at home for two-year work visas. Haitians were made eligible for H-2A or H-2B visas in FY22, but in mid-year 2023 local observers reported that only 23 H-visas were granted, and six more in FY23, since most Haitians are unable to convince consular officers that they will return to Haiti.

Brazil offers an example of premature industrialization: the share of manufacturing in GDP fell from 36 percent in 1985 to 13 percent in

2022. Many auto makers cite high costs and low profits as reasons for halting production, reflecting stagnant productivity linked to low education levels and lagging infrastructure. Russia, Argentina and the Philippines are other countries where the manufacturing share of GDP fell before per capita income reached \$20,000.

EUROPE, ASIA

The number of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe reached a six-year high of almost 100,000 in summer 2023, the most since 2015, when up to a million Syrians and others attempted the journey. Migrants from many countries assemble in Libya and Tunisia and pay smugglers to take them to southern Italian islands, from which they hope to move to northern European countries.

Rising flows of migrants unsettled several European countries. Over 8,000 migrants a month arrived by boat in Italy in 2022, when 4,000 migrants a month arrived by boat in the UK. European governments unwilling to change asylum laws or enforce tough border policies keep migrants out by making deals with semi-authoritarian leaders in Turkey or Libya to keep migrants there. The IMF and the EU have offered aid to Tunisia in a bid to slow the outflow of migrants. Tunisia's president has blamed migrants waiting to go to Europe for crime in the country.

EU leaders in June 2023 agreed on to establish reception centers on the 27-member block's external borders to assess the prospects of migrants for being recognized as refugees. Only 40 percent of asylum applicants were recognized as refugees in EU member states in 2022, but most of the foreigners who were rejected were not deported. Applicants from countries with asylum recognition rates of less than 20 percent such as Vietnam

would be held in the centers until they were deported or agreed to return to their countries of origin.

Foreigners recognized as refugees in the centers would be spread among EU member countries. Those such as Hungary that refuse to accept refugees would lose E20,000 in EU funds for each refugee rejected.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 displaced 13 million people, including seven million who left the country for Poland, Germany, and other EU countries. By May 2023, about half of the displaced Ukrainians returned to their places of origin, even if the war was nearby.

Britain

Net immigration was 606,000 in 2022, a blow to the governing Conservative Party that promised to reduce net migration to less than 100,000 a year. The 2022 arrivals included 160,000 migrants from Ukraine and Hong Kong. EU citizens lost the right to work without visas in the UK in January 2021, but British employers have been hiring more workers from non-EU countries such as India.

Almost 1,500 migrants a month cross the English Channel in small boats to seek asylum in the UK, prompting the British government to propose that asylum seekers who arrive by boat be sent to Rwanda to apply for asylum, with the UK providing L170,000 in aid per migrant to cover Rwanda's costs. In June 2023, a Court of Appeal ruled that Rwanda was unsafe for asylum seekers.

The UK food sector employs four million people or 13 percent of the labor force, including 430,000 or 11 percent in agriculture; 42 percent of food sector workers were in eating and drinking establishments. The UK is a net food importer, and especially of fruits and vegetables.

A Defra review in June 2023 called for a campaign to make food sector jobs more attractive, a revamped seasonal guest worker program, and more training of current food-sector workers. The review acknowledged the reality and perception that food-sector work is undesirable for reasons ranging from long hours to hard and outdoor work. The minimum National Living Wage has been L12.42 (\$13.27) since April 1, 2023, too low to attract workers who must often drive to farm workplaces.

There are 50,000 to 70,000 seasonal workers employed in the UK food sector. Many food sector firms have a core staff and rely on temp or staffing agencies to provide seasonal workers, which reduces training and the productivity of workers who often work in multiple workplaces. Employers reported issues with workers sent by Job Centres whose incentive is to place more workers rather than take the time to find good worker-job-employer fits.

The UK is offering 45,000 six-month visas in 2023 for temporary foreign workers to fill seasonal jobs in horticulture, up from 30,000 in 2022. Farm employers must guarantee seasonal migrants at least 32 hours of work a week. Migrant advocates say that many of the seasonal workers from non-EU countries including Nepal and the Philippines arrive in the UK in debt, and some do not earn enough in the UK to repay their recruitment debts. UK farmers produced L1 billion worth of fruit in 2022, L1.8 billion worth of vegetables, and L1.5 billion worth of ornamentals.

Many British stores use Facewatch, a facial recognition program that stores photos of shoplifters and alerts stores when they enter for about \$300 a month. Cameras and facial recognition technology is widespread in the UK, and Facewatch is now in hundreds of stores and its database is growing.

Brexit is shrinking the Irish fishing industry after the EU transferred some of the EU's fishing rights to the UK. EU funds are buying out fishing boats that are then scrapped.

Denmark

The Danish government in 2023 called for no more asylum seekers, instead pledging to resettle only persons certified as refugees by UNHCR. Denmark welcomed Ukrainians, but houses rejected Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers in centers and prevents them from working to encourage them to leave.

Since 2015, asylum seekers in Denmark receive a form of TPS that can be withdrawn when conditions in their country of origin improve, which is what Denmark believe has happened in parts of Syria.

France

Protesters mounted marches and strikes against President Emmanuel Macron in 2023 after he used a decree rather than a Parliamentary vote to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64 by 2030. The Constitutional Council upheld most of the new pension law in April 2023.

There was another round of protests that led to thousands of arrests in June 2023 after police killed a teen of North African descent who attempted to drive away during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb. Macron condemned the burning of cars and damage to schools and other buildings during the protests. The government does not collect data on the race of residents, arguing that all people are equal, so there are few studies of police discrimination by race.

There were riots in Clichy-sous-Bois in 2005 after two teens trying to escape police were electrocuted, prompting \$670 million worth of redevelopment that included renovated housing, a cultural center, and

improved public transit. However, 40 percent of residents are poor, and police-resident tensions remain high.

France is struggling with identity and inclusion. Beginning July 1, 2023, soccer players may not wear religious symbols, effectively banning female players wearing hijabs. France has promoted secularism since the 1789 revolution to keep the Catholic Church out of government affairs.

The world's richest man and woman in 2023 were French: Bernard Arnault of Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (LVMH) is worth over \$200 billion, and Françoise Bettencourt of L'Oréal over \$80 billion. The richest 10 percent of French residents have 80 percent of the country's wealth, and many made their fortunes in luxury goods. The richest Americans, Elon Musk worth \$180 billion and Jeff Bezos \$115 billion, made their fortunes in tech.

Germany

The government agreed with the 16 states in May 2023 to make it harder for foreigners to apply for asylum after 218,000 new applications were filed in 2022. The federal government will provide more financial aid to the states, which house and feed asylum seekers. In addition to "regular" asylum seekers, over a million Ukrainians arrived in 2022

SPD chancellor Olaf Scholz said that "controlling and limiting irregular migration" is a government priority. Germany wants EU front-line states to make more asylum decisions quickly and to deport rejected foreigners.

Over 15 million of the 84 million people living in Germany, almost 18 percent, were born outside the country, including six million who moved to Germany in the decade to 2023. The government in May 2023 proposed a law to shorten the time

that a foreigner must live in Germany before naturalizing from eight to six years and to allow foreigners to retain their original citizenship when they become naturalized Germans.

Germany's labor force of 47 million may decrease if labor force participation and immigration are unchanged. One estimate is that net immigration must average 400,000 a year to keep the German labor force at current levels.

Germany released a national security strategy in June 2023 meant to confront its vulnerability to new military and geopolitical threats, including migration. Germany's budget of E446 billion for 2024 would reduce social spending to limit the growth in public debt to E17 billion, but keep its pledge to spend two percent of GDP on the military.

Greece

Migrants on an overcrowded ship near a Greek Coast Guard vessel in June 2023 rejected Greek assistance because they wanted to reach Italy. The ship sank and up to 700 migrants drowned, including over 100 Pakistanis, prompting criticism of the Greek Coast Guard for not intervening. Over 100 migrants were rescued, and nine crew members were arrested.

Greeks re-elected PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis in June 2023, the pro-EU leader of the conservative New Democracy Party credited with keeping migrants out of the country and presiding over an improved economy. His government reduced taxes and debt while increasing the minimum wage and pensions, and retains the support of the EU despite pushing some migrants headed for Greek islands in small dinghies back toward Turkey.

A debt crisis peaked in 2013 and left a third of Greeks unemployed as the economy shrank by a quarter. Despite rapid growth in the past few

years, Greece still has the European Union's highest national debt as a share of GDP.

Italy

The government plans to increase the number of work permits granted to non-EU citizens to cope with labor shortages. There are 82,700 non-EU workers with permits in mid-2023, and the government plans to issue another 40,000 in 2023, rising to 165,000 in 2025. Some of the work permits are reserved for citizens of countries that cooperate with Italy and accept the return of irregular migrants.

Netherlands

The Dutch coalition government of PM Mark Rutte collapsed in July 2023 when several parties in the four-party coalition refused to delay unification of refugee families. Immigration topped 400,000 in a country of 17 million in 2022, and 21,000 foreigners applied for asylum while 11,000 foreigners applied to join family members who were in the country.

Russia

Russia is short of workers. A callup of 300,000 soldiers and several waves of emigration to escape military service has employers complaining of too few engineers and welders. Russia's population fell by a million in both 2021 and 2022 to less than 145 million, and the scarcity of workers is compounded by economic sanctions. Russia attracts migrants from ex-USSR countries, but most are low skilled.

Spain

Spain has 7.5 million foreign-born residents, making them 16 percent of the country's 48 million residents. Most arrived after 2000; the foreign-born population tripled between 2000 and 2008 from two to six million and has remained above six million despite efforts to

encourage some unemployed foreigners to leave during the 2008-09 recession.

Almost half of the foreign-born residents in Spain are from Latin America (Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador), followed by a third from Europe (Romania). The largest country of origin is Morocco, which accounts for an eighth of the foreign born.

Spain had six mass regularizations between 1986 and 2005 that saw progressively larger numbers of foreigners legalized, including 578,000 in 2005. Since then, governments used Organic Law 4/2000 to allow irregular foreigners who have established social or labor rights (*arraigo* or *arraigo laboral*) to legalize their status by registering at one of Spain's 8,000 municipalities.

Employers have gained more freedom to recruit foreign workers. Decree 2393 (2004) established labor shortage lists: if the occupation that an employer wants to fill with a migrant is on the list, there are few barriers to recruiting and employing migrants. Successive rightist and leftist governments have allowed foreigners who obtained jobs to stay in Spain, including foreigners whose asylum applications were rejected but who cannot be deported, such as Venezuelans. Spain has historically had high unemployment rates, and foreign-born residents have higher unemployment rates than workers born in Spain.

Sweden

Sweden has more asylum seekers per capita than any other European country, and has become a place with 62 gun homicides in 2022 as rival gangs battle for control of the drug trade. Rawa Majid, the Kurdish Fox who was born in Sweden but now lives in Turkey, is considered the drug kingpin. Turkey says that Sweden harbors Kurdish terrorists

and refuses to extradite Turkish citizens including dual national Majid to Sweden.

The Sweden Democrats, who blame migration for many Swedish problems, gained over 20 percent of the vote in 2022 elections. Academics say that many of migrant youth attracted to gangs are not well integrated into Swedish society.

Portugal

Drug use was decriminalized in Portugal in 2001; police register rather than arrest drug users, and soon reduced its prison population by a sixth. Two decades later, some are calling for a change in policy as drug use in public areas spreads, especially as some of the NGOs funded to assist drug users seem to affirm rather than change users' lifestyles. Overdoses and crime are rising, and some want Portugal to end what has become a stable drug culture.

Turkey

Turks went to the polls May 28, 2023 and gave President Recep Tayyip Erdogan 52 percent of the vote and another five-year term in a run off with challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu. Erdogan appealed to voters by raising the minimum wage, allowing more people to receive government pensions sooner, and promising to make the country of 85 million a keystone between eastern and western powers.

Major election issues include lax building standards that led to the deaths of over 50,000 people after a 7.8 earthquake on February 6, 2023. Turkey has strict construction codes, but they are rarely enforced because contractors could choose their inspectors until 2019. Nine times between 2002 and 2018, the government had amnesties that allowed builders to pay fees to legitimize buildings that did not

meet construction codes, and a 10th amnesty was being discussed just before the February 2023 earthquakes.

Erdogan took power in 2002 and promised to improve the lives of Turks who had been left behind in southern and eastern Turkey by encouraging the construction of new housing and infrastructure. Borrowing financed a building boom and increased inflation to 80 percent in 2022. Erdogan refuses to raise interest rates, which reduced the value of the lira.

Erdogan reminds Turkey of their Ottoman heritage, including the conquest of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. The Hagia Sophia, the world's largest building for hundreds of years, was converted to a mosque before it became a museum in the 1930s. Erdogan renamed it the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in 2020, attacked many cultural leaders who favor a more secular Turkey, and promised Turks a "Turkish Century" beginning in 2023, the 100 year anniversary of the founding of modern Turkey.

China

China's wage and salary labor force is 400 million, including 295 million migrant workers who moved to cities; the total labor force is 734 million. The average age of China's wage and salary workers is 38, and they have an average 14 years of schooling; 85 percent of industrial workers have a secondary school credentials and a third have college degrees.

Some 12 million young Chinese graduate each June from colleges. Many are having trouble finding jobs; the unemployment rate of workers 16 to 24 is over 20 percent. Marriages have fallen by half, from almost 14 million in 2013 to less than seven million in 2022 due to economic worries and covid lockdowns. Men say that they need a house

and car before marriage, while women worry about putting children through China's cutthroat education system.

Some Chinese graduates are dropping out of the corporate rat race, trading high salaries and prestige for more fulfilling manual labor jobs. Many disillusioned young people bemoan the intense competition to get into good colleges, to be recruited by large firms, and then to work long hours to please demanding managers, but most are unable to accept the sharp salary reductions that accompany leaving corporate jobs.

China has mountains of debt. The debts of households, companies and all levels of government are over 280 percent of GDP, more than the 260 percent in the US and other rich countries. China's debt doubled as a share of GDP over the past 15 years despite rapid economic growth. Much of the debt was incurred by developers, local governments and households to buy condos, some of which may never be built.

India

India's population surpassed China's in April 2023; both countries have about 1.4 billion people. Fertility varies within India, and is much higher in northern and poorer states such as Bihar than in southern and richer states such as Tamil Nadu. One consequence is internal migration from the poorer north to the richer south of India.

India's has the world's fifth largest economy, after the US, China, Japan and Germany. India and China had about the same per capita income in 1990, but in 2023 China's per capita income of \$13,000 is five times the \$2,500 of India, the result of China's land reforms and market- and export-led growth. The "make in India" campaign is creating manufacturing jobs, but at a slower pace

than in China due to India's low levels of education and restrictive labor laws. Manufacturing accounts for 28 percent of China's economy, double the 14 percent of India.

Can India create nonfarm jobs faster? India's infrastructure lags those of other fast-growing Asian countries, and only 20 percent of Indian women are in the formal workforce. Indian incomes are low; an income of \$300 a month or more puts an Indian among the top 10 percent of Indians by income. Many educated Indians prefer government to private sector jobs, as demonstrated by the fierce competition during entrance exams that see a 1,000 or more test takers compete for each government job.

China's covid lockdowns and US tariffs have prompted many firms to develop China-plus-one supply chains. India is competing with Vietnam, Mexico, Thailand, and Malaysia to be the plus one for many manufacturers. India is fourth in the value of manufactured exports, after China, Mexico and Vietnam.

PM's Narendra Modi's BJP Hindu nationalist party won elections in 2014 and 2019, and remains stronger than the opposition Congress Party, promising political stability after 2024 elections. India is often touted as the world's largest democracy, but critics emphasize the BJP's marginalization of the Muslim minority and the low share of women in wage and salary jobs as indicators of problems. Critics say that India's political elite look out for themselves and their cronies rather than embrace a market-oriented economy and public goods for all citizens.

India pursued a government-led import-substitution economic model until 1991, when looming bankruptcy forced changes in economic policy. The question is whether current policies, which often involve subsidies to well-connected industrialists,

can create the jobs needed for India's youthful population. Many public goods are provided by state governments, where corruption and favoritism can favor selected businesses over the public good.

Japan

Japan's population has fallen for over a decade, and is 125 million in 2023. The average Japanese woman has 1.3 children, well below the 2.1 fertility rate needed for a stable population; a quarter of 50-year old Japanese women have no children.

Since 2012, the labor force expanded by over four million even as the population declined. Reasons include government encouragement of firms that retain and hire older workers at least part-time, the creation of Silver Jinzai centers to help older workers return to work, and policies that help married women to work.

There were 1.8 million mostly professional foreign workers in Japan in October 2022. The government acknowledges that the technical trainee program is essentially a guest worker program that admits 320,000 foreigners to fill low wage jobs, and in June 2023 replaced the trainee program with a program that allows foreign workers to arrive in Japan with their families to fill semi-skilled jobs in 12 sectors indefinitely. A 2018 law opened doors to up to 345,000 less-skilled guest workers in 14 industries.

Thailand

The government was led by a general between a coup in 2014 and May 2023 elections. One election issue was the role of the monarchy in the country of 72 million that attracts migrants from poorer neighboring countries. The military supports King Maha Vajiralongkorn, trying to retain a law that punishes any criticism of the monarchy. Maha spends much of his time in Germany.

ANZ

Australia's net overseas migration was -56,000 between September 2020 and September 2021 and 304,000 the following year. Most of the jump in net migration was due to the return of foreign students, WHMs, and guest workers after Australia reopened its borders. The government has been making it easier for foreigners in Australia to adjust their status and remain.

Australia's minimum wage rose to A\$22.70 (\$15) an hour April 1, 2023 during a debate over how much to increase UI benefits or the jobseeker allowance, currently A\$1,400 a month for single adults. Almost a million Australians receive jobseeker or youth allowances, compared with four million who receive age and disability pensions and payments for parenting and caring. Australia expects to spend A\$145 billion on welfare payments in 2023-24.

Some 670,000 New Zealand citizens live in Australia, compared with 70,000 Australians in New Zealand. Beginning in July 2023, New Zealand citizens in Australia at least four years can become Australian citizens and retain their New Zealand citizenship.

President Biden cancelled plans to visit Papua New Guinea and Sydney in May 2023 to deal with the US debt limit. During the visit, Biden was to meet with leaders of Pacific Islands Forum countries and discuss climate change and migration.

New Zealand had 5.2 million residents in March 2023. Net migration to New Zealand was 65,400 in the year to March 2023, up from -19,300 in the year to March 2022. House prices that rose 50 percent during covid have since fallen by 20 percent, and may fall further as interest rates rise. Median home prices in mid-2023 were NZ\$780,000 (\$480,000), higher

than the \$400,000 median in the US. New Zealand has no capital gains tax, which explains why over half of New Zealand household wealth is in land and housing.

New Zealand's National Party in April 2023 proposed to double the number of RSE workers from the current maximum 19,000 to 38,000, to restrict foreign investment that often converts New Zealand farms to forests to reap carbon credits, and to reduce the regulation of an agricultural sector that generated two-thirds of New Zealand's total exports in 2022. The governing Labor Party is offering to allow 3,000 PIC migrant workers to become immigrants each year.

New Zealand produced 175 million 30-piece trays of kiwi fruit in 2022, the largest fruit export, but only 140 million trays in 2023 due to cold and rainy weather.

GLOBAL: WDR, POPULATION

The World Bank in April 2023 released a report outlining steps to "maximize the development impacts of cross-border movements on both destination and origin countries and on migrants and refugees themselves." The report opens with an excerpt from a Parsi legend in which residents offer migrants a vessel of milk to show the area was full and cannot support more people. The migrants respond by adding sugar to the milk to show that newcomers can enrich local residents.

The report focused on the 184 million non-citizen residents of host countries, not the total 280 million foreign-born residents; 100 million migrants in host countries are naturalized citizens.

Many of the 38-members of the OECD are opening more doors to migrant workers, including Germany and Japan. The 700 million projected increase in the working-age

population over the next two decades in sub-Saharan Africa exceeds the projected total working age population of North America and Europe in 2050 of 680 million.

Net migration to OECD countries was five million in 2022, including two million Ukrainians. South Korea raised the quota on EPS low-skilled migrants to 110,000 for 2023, and Japan is admitting more lower-skill migrant workers.

Population

Is demography destiny? Historically, larger populations meant more soldiers and thus more capability to conquer smaller neighbors. Rising agricultural productivity and the Industrial Revolution allowed fewer farmers to feed more people and transferred most of a country's workers first to industry and later to services. Residents of richer countries have higher educational levels and longer life expectancies.

China's economic takeoff in the 1980s is usually attributed to market-friendly policies and the demographic dividend that doubled the number of residents who are 15 to 64 between 1975 and 2010; this dividend yielded workers to staff factories that produced goods to export. China had a one-child policy between 1979 and 2015 that reduced fertility to perhaps 1.5 children per woman, well below the 2.1 fertility rate needed to maintain a population.

China's youthful population is shrinking and the elderly population is growing, which could push the median age in China to 50 by 2050, up from 25 in 1990. Russia also has a shrinking and aging population as well as high levels of education but low life expectancies.

American demographic exceptionalism arises from higher-than-average fertility and immigration, putting the US population of 335 million in 2023 on track to surpass 380

million by 2040. The US has a sixth of the world's college graduates and the most patent applications and scientific publications.

Populations are shrinking in the EU and Japan, which have well-educated and highly skilled workforces. Some analysts link ever-smaller cohorts of young men to lower levels of military might, while others believe that new technologies will make soldiers carrying arms less important to project power. Those who believe that demography is destiny urge the US to strengthen alliances with countries whose youthful populations are increasing, including India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Economy

The world economy is expected to expand by less than two percent in 2023, limiting the growth in per capita incomes. One reason for slower growth is de-globalization, as with many firms reducing their investments in China and reshoring or nearshoring production in higher-cost areas to protect their supply chains.

Many governments are also reducing economic freedom, often summarized as market-determined prices, limited government and few regulations, and adherence to the rule of law. Simultaneously, many governments have embraced deficit spending to cope with recessions and covid, contributing to rising inflation that reduced savings and investment.

During the 1990s, many opinion leaders embraced the Washington consensus of free-trade and market-led policies that would result in democracies and peace. However, the 2020s are marked by reshoring to improve supply-chain resilience and a government-subsidized transition to clean energy. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump slowed the march toward globalization, and

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine demonstrated that economic integration does not guarantee peace.

Globalization increased economic output, but also inequality and environmental damage. Markets do not always allocate capital productively or efficiently, and can aggravate rather than resolve socioeconomic problems. China benefited from globalization while becoming more autocratic, and many developing countries that incurred debt for good and bad projects are unable to repay. Markets allocate resources and also create power, as when Russia cut off the supply of natural gas to Western Europe or the US used the dollar-dominated financial system to sanction Russia.

Africa

Africa's population is projected to increase from 1.4 billion in 2022 to 2.5 billion in 2050 due to high fertility in many of the 54 African countries. A third of the world's 134 million births in 2022 were in Africa, putting Africa on track to have a larger prime-age working population larger than China and India combined in 2050.

Sudan, a country of 45 million at the intersection of the Arab and African worlds, was wracked by conflict in spring 2022 as two generals competed for power. Egypt and Russia supported one general, while Libya and the UAE supported the other. Gulf countries own farm land in Sudan that is irrigated by Nile River water to grow food that is exported. Russia wants to develop a port on the Red Sea to access the gold and rare earth minerals of Central Africa.

The US provides more food aid to Ethiopia than any other country, but suspended food aid in June 2023 after it was discovered that the Ethiopian government was stealing the food meant for the poor and selling it in local markets or export it to other countries.

The WHO declared the Covid pandemic over in May 2023. About seven million people died of or with covid globally, including 1.1 million in the US.

OTHER

CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

California had 1.4 million bearing acres of almonds yielding an average 2,000 pounds an acre in 2022, 430,000 acres of pistachios yielding 2,000 pounds an acre, and 400,000 acres of walnuts yielding almost two tons an acre. Grower prices of tree nuts have been falling, to \$1.40 a pound for almonds in 2022, \$2.10 for pistachios, and \$0.30 for walnuts. Each almond requires one to three gallons of water.

California had 42,000 acres of strawberries yielding an average 590 cwt per acre in 2022, 8,000 acres of blueberries yielding 81 cwt, and 7,000 acres of raspberries yielding 165 cwt. Grower prices were \$1.10 a pound for strawberries, \$3.20 a pound for blueberries, and \$3.15 a pound for raspberries.

US blueberry consumption is rising rapidly as US production and imports expand. Over 70 percent of US fresh blueberries are imported, including 40 percent of blueberry imports from Peru, 25 percent from Mexico, and 15 percent from Chile.

California's largest acreage fruit is grapes, including 575,000 acres of wine grapes, 135,000 acres of raisin grapes, and 120,000 acres of table grapes. Yields average 5.9 tons an acre for wine grapes, 7.5 tons for raisin grapes, 9.3 tons for table grapes.

Raisin acreage is declining faster than raisin production as growers retrofit vineyards with higher-yielding varieties of grapes that can be

harvested mechanically. Acreage averaged about 140,000 in recent years, when shipments average 500 million pounds a year. The US is a net exporter of raisins, shipping 170 million pounds abroad and importing 40 million pounds.

California has 47,000 acres of avocados yielding an average 2.9 tons an acre, 36,000 acres of peaches yielding 13 tons an acre, 34,000 acres of cherries yielding 1.6 tons an acre, and 34,000 acres of olives yielding 2.1 tons an acre.

Greengo Seed developed high-stalk iceberg lettuce with heads at least two inches off the ground, making it easier for hand workers or machines to harvest the heads destined for bagged salads.

AppHarvest's lender in June 2023 foreclosed on its 60-acre greenhouse in Richmond, KY, and may auction the \$66 million facility.

AppHarvest completed a \$127 million sale-leaseback agreement with Mastronardi for its Berea, Kentucky farm in December 2022. AppHarvest went public in February 2021 and was once valued at almost \$4 billion.

CEA firm Plenty opened a vertical farm in Compton, California in summer 2023 that has vertical towers to produce leafy greens; a third of employees were from Compton. However, other vertical farms went bankrupt or shut down, including AeroFarms in June 2023. Some estimates suggest that up to 10 acres of solar panels would be required to provide the electricity for one acre of vertical farming.

Vertical farms use less land and water to grow crops but require massive amounts of electricity, which is why some horizontal greenhouses tout land and water savings and use LED lights only to supplement sun light. CEA farms want to feed the world without frying the world by accelerating

global warming, but outdoor farming has a 12,000 year history of using land, water, and sunlight to produce crops for human and animal food that CEA is finding it hard to improve on.

US AGRICULTURE

US net farm cash income is projected to be lower in 2023 than the \$200 billion of 2022 due to higher production costs. However, the value of farm assets, 80 percent in farm land, rose to \$4 trillion in 2023, putting farmers in a strong financial position.

The US Farm Bill is projected to cost \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, including \$1.2 trillion or 80 percent for food aid such as SNAP benefits and \$10 billion in direct payments to farmers, down from a peak of \$46 billion in 2020.

Dairy milk has become controversial as Americans consume less fluid milk and more butter and cheese. Up to 10 percent of fluid dairy milk is consumed in schools, where regulations require milk to be offered with school meals. Some schools want to offer plant and nut based alternative milks to 30 million K-12 students, while others want to ban flavored dairy milk, arguing that chocolate milk has too many added sugars.

The US Supreme Court continues to rein in administrative agencies, ruling in May 2023 that the Environmental Protection Agency can only regulate wetlands "with a continuous surface connection" to navigable waters. In 2022, the USSC limited the authority of the EPA to curb emissions from power plants.

The world had over 600 million farms in 2020, and is expected to have fewer than 300 million in 2100.

Rice is the staple food for three billion of the world's eight billion people; 90 percent of the world's rice is produced in Asia.

The leading producers of rice are Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, and the leading exporter is India followed by Thailand and Vietnam.

FOOD, WINE

Would more immigration slow food price inflation? IFPA CEO Cathy Burns says: "Immigration reform is the single most important action that can be taken to give relief to Americans struggling to fight unprecedented food inflation and provide healthy food choices for their families."

Migrant advocates have been arguing that migrants fill jobs that Americans shun, so that their presence does not affect the wages of US workers. Many advocates in summer 2023 reversed course and argued that admitting more migrants would reduce wage growth and inflation.

Meat, dairy, and produce prices fell in 2023, but prices for many packaged foods have continued to increase. National manufacturers dominate the center of supermarkets, and many are trying to maintain profit margins that widened during covid. Walmart and other retailers are trying to persuade manufacturers to reduce the prices of dry goods and to sell more private-label goods.

Covid stay-at-home orders raised the value of food and beverage firms, prompting private equity funds to buy almost 800 such firms for \$32 billion in 2021, often using borrowed money. The assumption was the makers of staple foods could always make more money by raising prices: reopening after covid and rising interest rates are proving these assumptions wrong.

Tropicana is an example of a firm bought by private equity with debt that raised prices, lost market share and is no longer making a profit.

Walmart, with 1.7 million US employees in its 5,000 US stores, aims to automate more functions such as moving the fulfillment of online orders into lockers in its stores for pickup. Amazon, which bought Whole Foods in 2006, accounts for three percent of US grocery sales that total \$800 billion a year, far less than Walmart's 30 percent of US grocery sales, Kroger's 11 percent, and Costco's 10 percent.

Meat that is cured and smoked often has high levels of nitrates and salt, which raise the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Schools in some cities have banned processed meats and sausages from school lunches.

Americans spent \$76 billion in 2022 on weight loss and medical programs, diet soda and low-calorie frozen food, and gym memberships and similar activities classified as part of the diet industry. The behavioral approach to weight loss, eating less and exercising more, may be upended by new GLP-1 weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro that help people to feel full, with side effects that include nausea and diarrhea. Over 40 percent of American adults are overweight or obese.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously Food Stamps, is one of the largest federal means-tested assistance programs, spending \$150 billion a year to provide benefits to over 40 million US residents (Medicaid enrolls over 100 million people). The federal government fully funds SNAP benefits and shares the cost of administration 50-50 with states. Over 42 million US residents received an average \$205 per month per person in SNAP benefits in March 2023.

House Republicans in the May 2023 agreement to raise the debt ceiling required adults without children and aged 18-54 to work at least

20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits. Some Republicans want to prevent SNAP benefits from being used to buy soft drinks, candy, ice cream and other snacks, while Democrats favor offering extra benefits to SNAP recipients who buy fruits and vegetables.

Republicans also want to add work requirements for some Medicaid beneficiaries. Medicaid provides health care to poor US residents under 65, and 19 want to add work requirements. Medicaid provides health care services as well as housing, food and counseling. If more states use Medicaid funds to provide non-health services, Medicaid expenditures could rise.

The federal government spent \$1.2 trillion on means-tested benefits in FY22 including \$600 billion on Medicaid, \$200 billion on Earned Income Tax Credits, and \$150 billion on SNAP (<https://federalsafetynet.com/welfare-budget>).

American adults walk an average about 6,000 steps a day, below the recommended 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day. About 2,000 steps is one mile; most Americans walk about a mile in 20 minutes and burn 100 calories.

Food prices are rising twice as fast in Europe as in the US, where food prices were up eight percent in the past year. Farmgate food prices peaked in March 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and have since declined. Many food suppliers raised prices and have been slow to lower them, prompting some governments to investigate excess profits or greedflation among food manufacturers and supermarkets.

More US restaurants are adding service charges of up to 20 percent that are used at the discretion of the operator. Tips cannot be shared with chefs and other non-servers, and some operators use service charges to compensate non-tipped

staff. Most European restaurants add service charges and do not expect additional tips, while some US restaurants levy service charges and expect additional tips.

Bananas are typically the cheapest fresh fruit in supermarkets on a per-pound basis, often selling for \$0.50 to \$0.75 a pound when apples, berries and grapes are \$1 to \$4 a pound. About five percent of the world's bananas are Fairtrade, which promises higher prices to banana growers who share some of the premium with farmers and farm workers.

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre in May 2023 issued a report alleging that major tea sellers such as Unilever rely too much on certifiers such as Rainforest Alliance and Fair Trade to ensure labor rights on tea plantations. The Ethical Tea Partnership calls on tea sellers to require the plantations to pay living wages to their estimated 1.5 million workers and to respect worker rights.

The price of coffee fell below \$2 a pound in fall 2022 from the peak of over \$2.50 a pound in February 2022 as normal weather returned to Brazil.

Wine

Global wine production of 258 million hectoliters (one hectoliter is 26.4 gallons, so global production was 6.8 billion gallons) in 2022 exceeded consumption of 232 million hectoliters, putting downward pressure on wine prices. The US was the leading consumer of wine, accounting for 15 percent of global consumption, followed by France, 11 percent, and Italy, 10 percent.

Over 107 million hectoliters of wine worth E38 billion (\$41 billion) was exported in 2022. Italy and Spain each exported 22 million hectoliters, but French wine exports were worth E12 billion, almost a third of the value of global wine exports.

The US imported 15 million hectoliters of wine and Germany 13 million hectoliters. The average value of exported wine was about E3.50 a liter or less than \$3 a bottle.

The global area of vineyards was stable at 7.3 million hectares (18 million acres) for raisin, table and wine grapes. Spain had the acreage of most vineyards, followed by France, China, Italy, Turkey and the US.

Ste. Michelle Wine Estates (SMWE) sold Stag's Leap to Italy's Marchesi Antinori in May 2023. SMWE, which was sold to private equity firm Sycamore Partners for \$1.3 billion in 2021, has vineyards in California, Oregon and Washington.

New York City's Sherry-Lehmann Wine & Spirits was accused in June 2023 of not delivering some of the prepaid wine that was stored in Wine Caves, and of selling some wine stored in Wine Caves without the owner's consent. Sherry-Lehmann says that its business was hurt by Trump-era tariffs on French wine and covid lockdowns.

The Champagne region south of Reims in northern France is one of the world's most regulated wine growing regions. The 34,000 hectares (85,000 acres) of wine grapes are allowed to produce 10,000 to 12,000 kg/hectare (4.5 to 5.2 tons per acre) that can yield 300 million to 350 million bottles of champagne a year. At E7 per kg, grower revenue is about \$30,000 an acre.

France exported 27 million nine-liter cases of champagne in 2022 worth E6 billion, including E1 billion to the US. The two leading brands in the US are Veuve Clicquot and Moët & Chandon.

Australia has too much red wine despite a poor 2023 harvest, a result of a trade dispute with China that eliminated the most important export market. The grower price of some Shiraz and Cabernet grapes

dropped to \$100 a ton, and some grapes were not picked in April 2023.

Spirits outsold beer in the US for the first time in 2022. Spirits and beer each accounted for about 42 percent of alcohol sales, leaving wine with 16 percent.

Modelo displaced Bud Light as the top-selling beer in the US in mid-2023, accounting for over eight percent of US beer sales in retail stores as Bud Light fell toward seven percent after a boycott in the wake of a transgender endorsement, followed by Coors Light at six percent and Miller Lite at five percent; US beer sales peak during the summer months. Constellation Brands, which owns Robert Mondavi and other wine brands, also owns Corona and Modelo and has three breweries in Mexico.

Canadian-born David Gilmour (1931-2023) created a luxury resort on a former coconut plantation on the Fiji island of Wakaya that attracted Bill and Melinda Gates on their honeymoon. Some brought their own bottled water, prompting Gilmour to bottle and begin exporting Fiji water in 1996 that was acquired by Wonderful in 2004.

CLIMATE

The World Meteorological Organization warned in May 2023 that the temperature records set in 2016 are likely to be broken before 2030. Average global temperatures are about 1.1C or 2F warmer today than before the 1750s.

The Arctic and Antarctica are warming especially fast. The Arctic is often defined as the area north of 66.5 degrees or north of forested areas. Russia has about 15,000 miles of Arctic coastline and is upgrading military bases there, while the US is developing a deep-water port in Nome.

The WMO expects increased summer rainfall in Northern Europe and the Sahel in sub-Saharan Africa and reduced rainfall in the Amazon and parts of Australia due to El Niño (Christ child) conditions. El Niño is expected to raise temperatures in the eastern Pacific Ocean in 2023-24 after three years of La Niña or cooler ocean temperatures. Record temperatures in 2016 were linked to El Niño conditions.

The Inflation Reduction Act provides subsidies to accelerate the US transition to renewable energy; up to \$3 trillion in public and private funds could be invested by 2035. The US may speed the permitting process for new energy projects if Congress can agree on whether all new energy projects should be approved sooner or only renewable energy projects.

The US Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs must approve federal regulations issued by executive agencies. OIRA in April 2023 was asked to decide the benefits of federal regulation to future generations. The cost of each ton of carbon emissions was estimated to be \$50 a ton under Obama, \$5 a ton under Trump, and could top \$200 a ton under Biden.

California is committed to being carbon neutral by 2045, when all of the state's electricity is expected to come from renewable energy. This means increasing the amount of electricity generated, changing how electricity is generated, and moving electricity from solar and wind farms to consumers. Governor Gavin Newsom wants to amend the California Environmental Quality Act so that CEQA is not used to slow new energy infrastructure. Environmental groups oppose most CEQA changes, including those that would speed the energy transition.

India-born ex-Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga, who became head of the World Bank in June 2023, is

expected to accelerate efforts to reduce global poverty and to speed action to slow climate change. The V20 developing countries most vulnerable to climate change are pressing the World Bank and its 10,000 employees in 130 offices to do more to slow carbon emissions and to provide funding to help them adapt to climate change.

Bangladesh, a country of 170 million that is about the size of Iowa, is a low-lying nation crisscrossed by rivers that flow from the Himalayas. People are coping with the changing climate and other conditions, including soil and water made saline by shrimp farming and internal migration from areas that flood to cities on higher ground. Well-developed forecasting and messaging systems have sharply reduced losses due to floods.

The 3,860-square-mile sundari mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, protects southwestern Bangladesh from the cyclones of the Bay of Bengal. However, sundari mangrove trees are dying as the salt levels rise due ever less fresh water flowing through them.

How much autonomy should small island places have to manage climate mitigation funds? The US tested nuclear weapons on the island of Bikini in the Marshall Islands, and established trust funds in the 1980s to help pay for health care, build housing and cover the living costs of people affected. Between 2017 and 2023, some \$59 million was spent on land in Hawaii and on vehicles, leaving \$100,000 for the 7,000 beneficiaries.

US employment is projected to increase from 158 million to 166 million between 2021 and 2031. Employment in hired farm worker occupations (45-2000) is projected to remain at 900,000 over the next decade, including 60 percent crop workers (45-2092) and 25 percent livestock workers (45-2093).

AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROJECTIONS 2021–31

2021 National Employment Matrix title	2021 National Employment Matrix code	Occupation type	Employment, 2021	Employment, 2031	Employment distribution, percent, 2021	Employment distribution, percent, 2031	Employment change, 2021–31	Percent employment change, 2021–31	Occupational openings, 2021–31 annual average
Agricultural workers	45-2000	Summary	926.1	932.7	0.6	0.6	6.7	0.7	149.6
Agricultural inspectors	45-2011	Line item	14.1	14.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.5	2.5
Animal breeders	45-2021	Line item	7.3	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.3	4.3	1.2
Graders and sorters, agricultural products	45-2041	Line item	35.1	34.8	0.0	0.0	-0.3	-0.8	5.2
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	45-2090	Summary	869.6	876.1	0.5	0.5	6.6	0.8	140.6
Agricultural equipment operators	45-2091	Line item	66.6	74.7	0.0	0.0	8.0	12.1	12.1
Farmworkers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse	45-2092	Line item	562.9	575.7	0.4	0.3	12.8	2.3	92.6
Farmworkers, farm, ranch, and aquacultural animals	45-2093	Line item	228.5	213.6	0.1	0.1	-14.8	-6.5	34.0
Agricultural workers, all other	45-2099	Line item	11.6	12.1	0.0	0.0	0.6	4.9	2.0

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-detailed-occupation.htm>

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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