

Growers' Perspective on Attracting Migrant Labor and Migrants'

Workplace Choice in Michigan

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Abstract

This study was conducted to analyze Michigan's migrant farm labor situation. Data were collected from growers and migrants. Growers reported wages, housing, and perquisites as tools they use to attract migrants. Migrants reported housing, wages, grower honesty, and respectful treatment of workers to be key factors in choosing a workplace.

Introduction

For several years, a perception has persisted on Michigan farms that the supply of migrant farm labor does not meet grower demand (Schmucker). This perception has been corroborated in other states as well, where hand picked crops require large quantities of migrant labor yet the labor has not been forthcoming (Findeis). Some call this the result of an economy in which there are simply more alternatives to farm work for both legal and illegal immigrants.

Despite labor shortage complaints by growers, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that no such deficiency exists and one is not likely to occur in the near future (Kelly). More recently, in support of GAO's stance, there is evidence that migrant farm workers in Washington State and Oregon are having a hard time finding jobs (Verhovek). Statistics from the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service (MASS) are equally conflicting. For example, contrary to the grower statement that workers are increasingly difficult to recruit, the number of migrant laborers hired for farm work in Michigan actually increased from 1998 to 1999 (MASS). Yet, indicative of a shortage, while the average U. S. real wage increased by only 2.68% in 1999 (Labor Research Association), the average wage of Michigan farm workers rose by 4%, to a recorded mean of \$8.21 per hour (MASS).

A farm worker shortage is of concern to the agricultural community because it implies an inability by growers to harvest crops on time, resulting in potentially heavy financial and quality

losses due to unharvested fruits and vegetables. For this reason, it is important to understand the nature of the perceived shortage. Is the shortage a reflection of a decreasing number of migrant farm laborers seeking work in Michigan or is it the result of numerous underlying factors, including: 1) wages that are too low to attract workers, especially when compared to those offered by today's service-oriented economy, 2) inadequate farm labor recruiting practices, 3) housing inadequacies, or 4) substandard farm labor management practices by growers?

This study is important to the Michigan plant industries for two reasons. First, the state extensively relies on migrant workers to harvest its numerous labor-intensive crops (Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA)). An increasing failure to hire enough workers, for whatever reason, reduces growers' ability to harvest crops on time, resulting in potentially heavy financial and quality losses for un-harvested (or late-harvested) fruits and vegetables.

In addition, Congress intermittently considers legislative changes that could significantly influence the farm labor supply (Martin and Mason). While ensuring a steadier flow of legal migrant farm workers nation-wide, these changes may increase growers' labor costs through higher wages and mandatory housing improvements, in turn leading to higher agricultural prices and a reduction in the competitiveness of U.S. produce on the world market. If the absence of an actual labor shortfall can be documented, more cost-effective measures may be proposed for better aligning Michigan's farm labor supply and demand needs. For example, a more effective system than the one currently in place for directing migrant workers to growers who need laborers may be one solution. Another solution may be to establish a statewide committee, composed of growers and migrant farm workers, to identify cultural difficulties and resolve communication problems and between the two groups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the migrant farm labor market in Michigan, focusing on the current and future supply of and demand for migrant farm labor in the apple, asparagus, blueberry, and pickling cucumber subsectors. In addition to serving as a baseline study of the target crops, against which future data can be compared, it is expected that this study can also serve as a model for studying migrant farm labor issues among other commodity subsectors in Michigan and elsewhere in the country.

This study will benefit fruit and vegetable growers, by identifying the most effective ways for attracting and retaining migrant labor. It will benefit extension educators, by generating information that they can share with growers to improve their ability to recruit and retain migrant labor. It will benefit researchers, by establishing a line of research that can be expanded to other crops and elsewhere in the country. Last, it will benefit Michigan (and other state) legislators, by providing them with information they need to take into account when considering legislative changes regarding migrant labor in Michigan and elsewhere.

Scope of the Study

In this study, Michigan growers and migrants were asked to recall their experiences during the 1998-2000 growing seasons. Data were collected through a grower mail survey, a migrant pilot survey, and a migrant focus group--all of which focused on assessing the current and perceived future supply of and demand for migrant farm labor in the apple, asparagus, blueberry, and pickling cucumber subsectors.

The study targeted growers who participate in these four subsectors for the following reasons. In 1999, Michigan led the United States in blueberry and pickling cucumber production, and was the third leading state in apple and asparagus production. During 1994-

1998, apples accounted for one-half and blueberries for one-quarter of Michigan's fruit production value, while pickling cucumbers accounted for 12% of Michigan's vegetable production value. Asparagus is a \$20 million industry in Michigan (Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service, 1999). In 1999, Michigan apples accounted for 12% of national production, asparagus for 14%, blueberries for 40%, and pickling cucumbers for 26% (Michigan Department of Agriculture, 1999).

Grower Mail Survey

Of the 52,000 growers of all crops in Michigan, 2,205 focused their operations on apples, asparagus, blueberries, or pickling cucumbers in 2000. Of these, mail surveys were sent to 270 apple, 190 asparagus, 240 blueberry, and 20 pickle growers. Forty-three percent of the growers who were contacted returned the survey (n=310). Forty-one percent of this subset (n=126), who both hired migrants and grew one of the four target crops, were included in the grower data set (53 apple, 31 asparagus, 31 blueberry, 10 pickling cucumber growers). Grower experience working on a farm and hiring migrant farm workers can be seen in table 1.

Migrant Pilot Survey and Migrant Focus Group

Although 40,000 migrant farm workers are estimated to participate in Michigan's economy annually, only a supply side pilot study of migrants (n=18) was possible at this time. First, student volunteers from Michigan State University (all of whom were raised in migrant families) administered a pilot survey to 10 migrant respondents. Table 2 describes some migration habits of the pilot survey participants. Second, a migrant focus group (n=8), representing a group of students from migrant farm worker backgrounds recruited in recent years by Michigan State University, met in February 2003.

Research Findings

A key goal of this research was to identify areas of commonality and dissonance between Michigan growers and migrant workers. The perceptual differences noted between growers and migrants can be categorized as follows: job search and recruitment, migrant housing and perquisites, wages, reasons for (and solutions to) the perceived decline in migrant farm labor, and characteristics of a satisfactory work environment--as discussed below.

Job Search and Recruitment

Nearly three-quarters of the grower respondents reported having verbal agreements with past workers, indicating that the core of workers is fairly stable (tables 3 and 4). Yet, only one of the ten migrant survey respondents reported returning to the same farm year-after-year, suggesting that migrants do not rely on verbal employment agreements as readily as growers (table 5).

The year-to-year migrant worker retention rates were found to be virtually unchanged during the 1998-2000 growing seasons (table 6). Both growers and migrants seldom used the matching services offered in Michigan to pair migrants with growers in need of workers.

Nine of the ten migrant survey respondents considered it easy to find farm employment in Michigan. Migrants with long years of experience claimed to know 'good' Michigan farms from 'bad' ones, with word-of-mouth playing an important role in guiding workers towards rewarding work opportunities.

Migrant Housing and Perquisites

More than 80% of the grower respondents supplied migrant housing with the mean number of migrants for whom housing was available exceeding the mean number of workers employed or needed on any farm (tables 7 and 8). This is likely explained by housing that is in poor condition--no longer habitable but still accounted for in the analysis, and potentially responsible

for the focus group participants' preference for choosing their own accommodations when possible.

In terms of perquisites, apple and pickling cucumber growers reported providing more perquisites to migrants than blueberry or asparagus growers (table 9). Nevertheless, the migrant workers stated that they hardly consider in-kind provisions (such as laundry facilities, phone access, or end-of-season fiestas) as a supplement to their earnings.

Wages

Growers and migrants described contrasting wage scenarios. According to growers, the standardized wages they paid to migrants exceeded minimum wage by 24%. When taking into account housing, utility, and perquisite values and adding these values to the wages paid, real wages (as estimated by growers) exceeded minimum wage by 46% (table 10). Yet, the migrants stated that they typically receive less than minimum wage. Focus group participants explained this difference by describing how growers cited regulations that enabled them to reduce migrant earnings.

Reasons For (and Solutions To) the Perceived Decline in Migrant Farm Labor

Both growers and migrants anticipated a decline in migrant labor availability over the next few years, mostly because of increasing opportunities elsewhere in the economy (table 11). Table 12 catalogs grower reasons for this expectation. Ten percent of the growers expected to close their farm operations in the near future, due to rising labor costs, while three of the ten migrant survey respondents do not plan to seek work in Michigan five years after this study.

A noteworthy finding was that growers looked exclusively past the farm gate for a solution to the anticipated labor shortfall (table 13). They recommended such interventions as

the use of seasonal permits for foreign workers, federally guaranteed minimum crop prices, and the relaxation of immigration regulations.

While the migrant survey respondents and focus group participants mentioned the importance of higher wages and satisfactory housing, they also wanted to work on a farm where they felt valued and respected, and where the grower displayed honesty and integrity (table 14). The focus group participants reported that the hard labor associated with farm work is not a problem for them, but that they did not like to work in an environment where they felt degraded or unfairly treated.

Characteristics of a Satisfactory Work Environment

Growers focused on economic incentives to attract workers. Seventy-one percent reported building or improving existing migrant housing during the previous three years (1998-2000) and nearly 50% increased migrant worker pay levels during this same time period. In addition, some growers added a new lunchroom or modern bathroom facilities, or provided an end-of-season bonus, hired a crewleader to help with migrant hires, planted smaller trees (apple growers), planted vegetables to provide continuous employment, or dismissed long-term workers who could not get along with new workers.

Meanwhile, the migrant respondents stated that non-economic (i.e., management-related) changes were as likely as higher wages to attract additional labor to where it is needed. Although migrants consider economic criteria, such as wages, when seeking farm employment, they considered non-economic criteria as soon as their family's most basic economic needs have been met (table 15). These criteria included the physical condition of the housing in which they are expected to live, the difficulty of the work they are expected to perform, and the grower's reputation as a fair and respectful employer. Thus, to ensure a sufficient supply of migrant farm

workers in the future, growers need to consider both economic and non-economic changes, especially the way they manage their farms.

Recommendations

Four recommendations are presented in response to this research. First, a regular survey of Michigan growers should be conducted to better understand long-term trends in grower-migrant relations and labor availability. Second, an extensive survey of migrant farm workers who regularly come to Michigan should be carried out to both expand upon the migrant data obtained from the migrant pilot study and to provide data that can be compared to the grower data. Third, Michigan should establish a task force to improve communication and understanding between growers and migrants. Fourth, similar research projects should be conducted in other parts of the country, as a way to better understand grower-migrant dynamics in different contexts.

A Long-Term Study of Michigan Growers

Given that the grower data collected for this study represent baseline data, it is recommended that similar data be collected every two to three years in the state of Michigan. The Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service (MASS) would be an ideal collaborator because MASS conducts annual agricultural surveys of Michigan farms, covering all subsectors rather than just the four subsectors included in the present study. Every two to three years, a shortened, modified version of the present survey could be attached to the annual survey conducted by MASS.

These data would enable researchers to monitor migrant labor market trends over time and across subsectors. As in the present research, the questions would focus on recruitment and retention of migrant farm workers, number of migrant hires per farm and subsector, whether or not growers are experiencing a labor shortage, how severe the shortage is in a given year, the role of wages and perquisites in attracting migrants to farms, the characteristics of farms

experiencing a labor shortage, and number of return workers by farm and subsector. Given the expectation of 68% of the grower survey respondents that migrant labor will continue to decline into the future, this information would be useful to growers, migrants, extension educators, researchers, and policy-makers.

An Extensive Survey of Migrant Farm Workers

Having completed the migrant farm worker pilot study, it is recommended that a thorough study of Michigan migrant farm workers take place. This study would be most successful if conducted in Texas and/or Florida off-season, while migrants are not employed by a particular grower and time would not have to be taken away from either their harvesting activities or leisure time.

Periodically, the state of Michigan, in collaboration with other states, conducts information sessions in these states to attract migrant workers to northern U.S. agricultural regions. A short written survey (similar to the pilot migrant survey), administered to migrant workers attending these sessions, would be the most efficient and least biased way in which to collect these data. One goal of this survey would be to gather data that is statistically comparable, both in number and content, to the data collected from Michigan growers. It is projected that as many as 600-1,000 surveys could be completed and returned during a week's worth of information sessions. Although this total includes migrants who choose to work in states other than Michigan, the number of migrants who traditionally seek Michigan employment would be sufficiently high to conduct the necessary analyses.

Establishment of a Migrant Task Force

The third recommendation proposes establishing a task force whose role would be to improve communication between Michigan growers, migrant farm workers, and consumers. Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Growth could spearhead this initiative, encouraging the

participation of state officials, Migrant Resource Council representatives, migrant workers, growers, extension educators, and relevant scholars whose expertise would provide valuable insights to such a commission.

As part of their mission, the task force could design a newsletter for distribution to both growers and migrants, as a venue for learning more about each other's economic and cultural environment. Likewise, separately held and joint seminars geared towards cultural awareness and ways for improving communication between growers and migrants would be useful. Social capital theory shows that increased interaction can lead to increased trust and respect over time between individuals. Thus, workshops that encourage growers and migrants to participate together in small-group discussions on topics of mutual concern (for example, the demise of the family farm or successful management techniques for a profitable agricultural enterprise) would serve as tools for fostering these kinds of interaction.

Last, it is recommended that the task force develop an educational curriculum geared towards informing young Michigan residents about the essential role of the migrant farm worker in our economy. School age children would be the ideal target audience for this campaign. Just as our communities have gained strength through tolerance by having Michigan children learn more and earlier about the benefits of diversity, communities would be strengthened by introducing migrant-oriented curricula to early elementary education programs. Such curricula should include a history of migrant farm workers in Michigan, where the migrants come from, how migrant lifestyles are similar to and different from those of permanent residents, the kind of work that migrants do, and how migrant efforts enrich the lives of Michigan residents. A secondary benefit to this curriculum addition would be an easier acceptance of migrant children (by other children) as they move into and out of Michigan classrooms.

Similar Research in Other Parts of the United States

Growers and migrants from the same farms should also be interviewed in a joint study.

Depending on the insights gleaned from a comparison of their responses, a time series approach could be implemented whereby co-working growers and migrants are contacted every three to five years. This would enable the documentation of grower-migrant relationship trends. A broad spectrum of migrant-hiring subsectors could be included.

Similar studies in different subsectors and U.S. regions are also needed to better understand grower-migrant interactions throughout the country. In different parts of the country some problems will be similar while others will vary. Thus, expanding the knowledge base associated with these similarities and differences should help improve grower and migrant work environments nationwide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research suggests that even if growers could afford to pay higher migrant wages, the problem of attracting workers to farms presently experiencing a labor shortage may not be solved. Migrants reported fair, respectful treatment by employers as an additional criterion when seeking employment. Word-of-mouth advice helps workers to avoid farms where their definition of fair treatment is not met. Justified or not, a grower labeled unfair or unkind by migrants may continue to have a hard time attracting enough workers to his or her farm, even when providing above average wages.

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Table 1. Grower experience working on a farm and hiring migrant farm workers, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Mean years ^a	Apple (n = 52)	Asparagus (n = 31)	Blueberry (n = 32)	Pickle (n = 10)
Worked on a farm ^b	31 (13)	29 (12)	29 (12)	33 (12)
Grew target crop ^c	30 (14)	24 (8)	27 (11)	16 (8)
Managed farm ^b	24 (13)	23 (13)	23 (12)	27 (11)
Hired migrants ^d	23 (12)	16 (9)	21 (12)	21 (7)

a - Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

b - 2-tailed t-test shows non-significant difference across primary crop pairings.

c - 2-tailed t-test shows significant difference for apple-asparagus pairing (significance level = .009).

d - 2-tailed t-test shows significant difference for apple-asparagus pairing (significance level = .007).

Table 2. General information about the pilot survey participants (Michigan, 2002)

Migrant statistic	Mean value	Standard deviation	n ^a	Comment
Years in MI as migrant	23.3	14.5	9	
Months in MI doing farm work:	2002: 5.7 2001: 5.0 2000: 5.7	2.8 2.1 1.1	10 10 10	
# of adults that migrate with respondent (including self)	3.2	2.4	10	Refers to 2002
# of children that migrate with respondent	2.5	2.1	10	Refers to 2002
# people contributing to family income	2.4	1.4	9	Refers to 2002

a - n refers to the number of responses to a particular question.

Table 3. Growers' methods for recruiting migrant workers, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Hiring method ^a	Grower type (%)			
	Apple (n = 53)	Asparagus (n = 31)	Blueberry (n = 32)	Pickle (n = 10)
Verbal agreement with past workers	75	74	59	90
Farm gate hires	75	42	56	60
Crewleader hires	21	19	28	20
Other	25	23	22	10
State matching services	9	10	9	0

a - A grower may use more than one hiring method.

Table 4. Percentage of workers hired by different methods, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Hiring method ^a	Grower type (mean %)			
	Apple (n = 53)	Asparagus (n = 31)	Blueberry (n = 32)	Pickle (n = 10)
Verbal agreement	47.3	48.9	36.6	62.2
State matching services	2.2	1.5	1.0	0.0
Crewleader	11.1	9.5	20.8	16.0
At the farm gate	28.1	21.7	25.0	17.8
Other	6.9	14.7	12.7	2.0

a - Since these are mean percentages across all growers in a subsector, they do not necessarily sum to one hundred.

Table 5. Migrant opinions about the difficulty of finding work in Michigan and how work is found (Michigan, 2002)

Characteristic	Percent (n = 10)
Considers it easy or hard to find work in Michigan	Easy – 90% Hard ^b – 10%
Finds places to work by ^a :	Family/friends – 60% Asking around – 20% Always returning to same farm – 10% Driving around looking for farms – 10% No response – 10%

a Multiple responses possible due to open-ended nature of this question.

b The reason cited for why it is hard to find work is that “growers already have workers, making it hard to break in.”

Table 6. Mean percentages of migrant laborers that worked previously for the same grower, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Grower type ^{a,b}	Worked previously on grower's farm	Worked 5 or more years for grower
Apple (n = 53)	57.2% (29.6)	32.9% (32.6)
Asparagus (n = 31)	64.6% (35.5)	41.7% (37.3)
Blueberry (n = 32)	55.8% (36.4)	32.3% (33.7)
Pickle (n = 10)	73.5 (17.5)	55.0% (27.0)
Total (n = 126)	60.0 (32.3)	36.7% (34.0)

a - Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

b- Two-tailed t-test shows non-significance across all primary crop pairs.

Table 7. Percentage of growers that provide migrant housing, by subsector

(Michigan, 2000)

Provided migrant housing ^a	Grower type			
	Apple (n = 53)	Asparagus (n = 31)	Blueberry (n = 31)	Pickle (n = 10)
Yes	93%	75%	58%	100%

a - Chi-square test showed significant difference in percentages between apple and blueberry growers (level = .001).

Table 8. Mean number of workers housed in 2000, number that were employed, and additional workers needed, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Type ^{ab}	Migrants hired ^c	Add'l workers needed ^d	Total ^e	Housing capacity ^f	Housing surplus/deficit ^g
Apple	40.3 (51)	6.4 (8)	46.7	69.9 (48)	23.2
Asparagus	13.3 (31)	3.6 (8)	16.9	39.5 (23)	23.4
Blueberry	44.9 (32)	22.5 (10)	67.4	60.9 (18)	-6.5
Pickle	37.2 (10)	15.0 (1)	52.2	109.1 (10)	56.9

a - Number of respondents given in parentheses.

b - Standard deviations cited elsewhere in text.

c- Mean worker days/farm based on responses of those with and without sufficient workers in 2000.

d - Based on responses of those without sufficient workers in 2000.

e - Sum of hired and needed migrants/day.

f - Based on those with and without sufficient workers in 2000.

g - Housing capacity minus sum of hired and needed migrants/day.

Table 9. Number and percentage of growers providing secondary perquisites to migrant workers, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Growers providing perquisites		Grower type			
		Apple	Asparagus	Blueberry	Pickle
Provided migrant perquisites ^{ab}		58%	35%	35%	60%
		(52)	(31)	(31)	(10)
Number of respondents		30	11	11	6
Type of	End-of-season bonus	63%	45%	45%	33%
perquis-	Improved lunch facility	17%	9%	0%	33%
ite ^c	Telephone Access	43%	27%	55%	50%
	Transportation	23%	18%	18%	33%
	Laundry facilities	40%	18%	27%	50%
	End-of-season fiesta	30%	55%	27%	67%
	Other ^d	17%	0%	36%	50%

a - Chi-square test shows significant difference between apple and asparagus growers (level = .05), and apple and blueberry growers (level = .05).

b - Number in parentheses refers to the number of respondents to that question.

c - Number in parentheses refers to subsectoral mean for perquisite.

d - Other perks included paid rain days, overtime, meals or food, new housing, an interpreter, jail bond money, daycare, and loans. Each of these was cited two times or less by growers.

Table 10. A comparison of real and standardized wages, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Wage rate (\$/hour)	Grower type				Total
	Apple n = 31	Asparagus n = 20	Blueberry n = 7	Pickle n = 8	n = 66
Real wage rate	7.31	6.43	7.28	8.83	7.28
Standardized wage rate	6.45	6.18	6.75	6.13	6.39
Real wage rate minus standardized wage rate	.86	.45	.53	2.70	.89

Table 11. Growers' expectations regarding the availability of migrant workers in five years, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Expected	Grower type (n, (%))				Total
Availability ^a	Apple (n = 51)	Asparagus (n = 30)	Blueberry (n = 32)	Pickle (n = 9)	(n = 122)
Higher	2 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.5%)
Lower	34 (66.7%)	20 (66.7%)	23 (71.9%)	6 (66.7%)	83 (68.0%)
Same	15 (29.4%)	10 (33.3%)	8 (25.0%)	3 (33.3%)	36 (29.5%)

a - A chi-square test showed non-significant differences among primary crop pairs.

Table 12. First or second place grower ranking (%) of reasons for why there is a migrant labor shortage, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Possible reason for farm labor shortage ^{ab}	Grower type			
	Apple (n = 16)	Asparagus (n = 8)	Blueberry (n = 18)	Pickle (n = 4)
Higher-paying non-farm-work elsewhere	69%	63%	33%	25%
Too few migrants coming to Michigan now	63%	25%	39%	25%
Tighter INS restrictions	38%	25%	39%	25%
Cannot provide enough housing to meet federal standards	6%	25%	33%	0%
Higher-paying farm-work elsewhere	0%	0%	11%	20%
Insufficient matching services	6%	0%	0%	0%

a - Growers were asked to rank the top three reasons for the labor shortage, assigning a 1 to the most likely reason, a 2 to the second most likely reason, and a 3 to the third most likely reason. Data in this table refer to the top two rankings per reason only.

b - Due to small sample size, no significance testing was performed.

Table 13. Growers' suggestions for increasing the future supply of migrant workers, by subsector (Michigan, 2000)

Suggestions	Grower Type (responses, (% of responses))				Total (responses, (% of responses))
	Apple (n = 37)	Asparagus (n = 22)	Blueberry (n = 25)	Pickle (n = 8)	
Issue seasonal permits	14 (29%)	10 (39%)	2 (6%)	4 (45%)	30 (25%)
Relax regulations	7 (15%)	2 (8%)	20 (57%)	0 (0%)	29 (25%)
5-year visas for migrants, followed by citizenship	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	1 (11%)	9 (8%)
Rework migrant-related tax structure	4 (8%)	6 (23%)	0 (0%)	2 (22%)	12 (10%)
Higher crop prices	6 (13%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	7 (6%)
Migrant housing building assistance	6 (13%)	4 (15%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)	15 (13%)
Crop pattern changes to help migrants stay on one farm	5 (10%)	1 (4%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	7 (6%)
Other	2 (4%)	3 (11%)	2 (6%)	2 (22%)	9 (7%)
Total responses	48 (100%)	26 (100%)	35 (100%)	9 (100%)	118 (100%)

a - Due to n < 30 for three of the four crops, no significance testing was performed.

Table 14. Percentage of pilot survey respondents ranking following factors among the top three considerations when seeking farm work in Michigan (Michigan, 2002)

Factor	Percentage of respondents ranking this factor among top three reasons (n = 9)
Pay	100%
Housing	100%
Good employer relationship/decent boss	44%
Amount of work	33%
Area around farm	11%

Table 15. Characteristics that migrant workers felt contribute to a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ work environment (Michigan, 2002)

Characteristic ^a	Description	Percent (n = 10)
Good	-- People treat us nicely - respectfully	50%
	-- Grower pays well	40%
	-- Housing clean, safe (especially for children)	30%
	-- Pay depends on season (if crop good, then pay less)	10%
	-- Pay is given weekly	10%
	-- A bonus is given	10%
	-- No response	20%
Bad	-- The grower tries to cheat us	30%
	-- Pay too little	30%
	-- Require too much work	20%
	-- Poor living conditions (i.e., outside utilities, no heat)	20%
	-- Farmer has insufficient money to cash checks	10%
	-- Farmer rude, selfish, and inconsiderate	10%
	-- No response	20%

a - More than one response was possible due to the open-ended nature of this question.