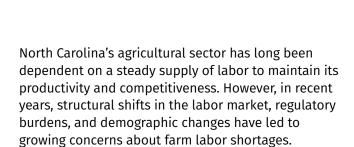
RESEARCH PAPER

HARVEST ON HOLD

NORTH CAROLINA'S AGRICULTURE LABOR SHORTAGES



THE CHALLENGES

- The American agricultural workforce has historically relied heavily on foreign-born laborers, particularly from Mexico
- For a variety of reasons, net migration from Mexico has decreased since the early 2000's, meaning fewer new workers are entering the U.S. agricultural labor force
- Sectors such as construction, food service, and manufacturing have become attractive alternatives for workers who might have otherwise pursued agricultural jobs
- Unlike other industries, farming is uniquely constrained by seasonal labor needs, which can make job stability difficult for workers
- As domestic labor shortages persist, farmers have increasingly turned to the H-2A visa program, which allows foreign agricultural workers to enter the U.S. on a temporary basis. However, the program is costly, bureaucratic, and restrictive

IMPLICATIONS

- A declining domestic workforce and rising labor costs incentivize farmers to shift production overseas, where labor is cheaper and regulatory burdens are lower
 - This trend raises concerns about food security, as increased reliance on foreign-grown produce makes the U.S. more vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, geopolitical instability, and foreign market fluctuations
- The economic consequences of these labor shortages are severe. Labor shortages lead to a drop in production and farm revenue, while driving up prices on consumers

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reform the H-2A visa program to reduce costs and bureaucracy
- Expand agricultural education in K-12 schools through school choice
- Encourage technological innovation in agriculture through a regulatory sandbox
- Reduce state-level regulatory burdens on farmers, such as occupational licensing and land use restrictions

