



Gosia Wozniacka/Associated Press

Farmworkers near Fresno, Calif., pick paper trays of dried raisins off the ground in 2013 and heap them onto a trailer in the final step of raisin harvest. Thousands of farmworkers in California, the nation's leading grower of fruits, vegetables and nuts, may soon be able to leave the uncertainty of their seasonal jobs for steady, year-around work building homes, cooking in restaurants and cleaning hotel rooms under the executive action President Barack Obama announced in November.

Farmers brace for labor shortage under new policy

By SCOTT SMITH
Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Farmers already scrambling to find workers in California — the nation's leading grower of fruits, vegetables and nuts — fear an even greater labor shortage under President Barack Obama's executive action to block some 5 million people from deportation.

Thousands of the state's farmworkers, who make up a significant portion of those who will benefit, may choose to leave the uncertainty of their seasonal jobs for steady, year-around work building homes, cooking in restaurants and cleaning hotel rooms.

"This action isn't going to bring new workers to agriculture," said Jason Resnick, vice president and general counsel of the powerful trade association Western Growers. "It's possible that because of this action, agriculture will lose workers without any mechanism to bring in new workers."

Although details of the president's immigration policy have yet to be worked out, Resnick said the agricultural workforce has been declining for a decade. Today, the association estimates there is a 15 to 20 percent shortage of farmworkers, which is driving the industry to call for substantial immigration re-

form from Congress, such as a sound guest worker program.

"Hopefully there will be the opportunity for comprehensive immigration reform," said Karen Ross, secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. "That's the right thing to do for this country."

California's 330,000 farmworkers account for the largest share of the 2.1 million nationwide, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Texas comes in a distant second with less than half of California's farmworkers.

Once Obama's executive action starts going into effect next year, it will protect the parents of legal U.S. residents from deportation and expand a 2012 program that shields from deportation people brought into the U.S. illegally as children.

Manuel Cunha, president of the Fresno-based Nisei Farmers League, estimates that 85 percent of California's agricultural workers are using false documents to obtain work.

Cunha, who has advised the Obama administration on immigration policy, figures that 50,000 of the state's farmworkers who may benefit from the president's executive action could leave the fields and packing houses in California's \$46.4 billion agricul-

tural industry.

"How do I replace that?" he said. "I think we're going to have a problem."

Many farmworkers are paid above minimum wage, earning more hourly than they will in other industries, but he said that workers that leave will gain year-around jobs and regular paychecks, rather than seasonal employment.

While farmers may face a setback, Obama's order is good for workers, who support families and fear that any day they may be pulled over driving to work and deported, said Armando Elenes, national vice president of the United Farm Workers.

With proper documentation, workers will feel empowered and be more valuable, Elenes said. Confronted with abuse at work — such as being paid less than minimum wage or denied overtime — workers will be able to challenge their employer or leave, he said.

In addition, their newfound mobility will create competition for farmworkers and potentially increase wages, Elenes said, adding, "It's going to open up a whole new world for workers. A lot of times, if you're undocumented, you feel like you're stuck."

Ed Kissam, an immigration researcher at the immi-

grant advocacy group, WKF Giving Fund, said he doubts a significant number of farmworkers will leave the industry. Farmworkers often lack the language, education and technical skills to move up the employment ladder, he said. "Surely some will," Kissam said. "It's not going to be a mass exodus."

Edward Taylor, a researcher at the University of California-Davis, said a shortage of farmworkers could be exacerbated by a dwindling flow of workers from Mexico, the largest supplier of labor to the United States. Taylor said the lower birthrates, more industrial jobs and better schools in rural Mexico are cutting into the supply of farmworkers.

"U.S. and Mexican farmers have to compete for that diminishing supply of farm labor," he said. "Once this change hits, there's no going back."

Central Valley farmer Harold McClarty of HMC Farms, who hires a thousand workers at harvest time, said there is no replacing the human hand for picking the 50 varieties of peaches he grows. His workers pick a single tree five or more times, making sure the fruit they take is ripe.

"We haven't found any machines that can do anything like that," he said. "You can't just pick the whole tree."

ConAgra lifts Magnida fertilizer plant appeal

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — ConAgra Foods has rescinded its appeal of a clean air permit approved for a proposed Power County nitrogen fertilizer plant, removing a major barrier for the project.

However, the estimated cost of building the facility has inflated from \$2.1 billion to about \$3 billion, due largely to a rise in U.S. construction costs fueled by strengthening demand, said Ric Sorbo, project manager with Texas-based Magnida.

Magnida had hoped to close on all of the necessary financing for the project by the end of 2014. Sorbo remains optimistic that Magnida will still reach financial close by the end of the first quarter of 2015 and break ground next summer.

ConAgra's American Falls potato processing plant manager raised concerns during a public meeting last summer about the proximity of the proposed fertilizer plant to his company's facility. Specifically, he mentioned groundwater issues, emergency preparedness and odors. ConAgra protested the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's approval of Magnida's clean air permit last May, which threatened to delay the company's timeline, Sorbo said.

"We've had conversations



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Ric Sorbo, project manager over the Magnida fertilizer plant proposed in Power County, addresses the public during a June meeting in American Falls. The estimated construction cost of the project has inflated to about \$3 billion.

with ConAgra starting in late May to see if we could not resolve this without going through the litigation process," Sorbo said. "We've learned an awful lot about them and their operation, and they've learned an awful lot about us and our operation, and we've come to the conclusion that we can be good neighbors with each other."

Sorbo said the major issue

addressed by the agreement between the companies pertained to ConAgra's concerns regarding how the Magnida plant would affect a limited groundwater supply in the area.

"Both parties wanted to make sure we both would have the water we needed to have. It was a supply issue, not a quality issue," Sorbo said, adding the agreement would address

ConAgra's concerns, should they arise.

Sorbo said other concerns were resolved simply through better communication. Both parties agreed to keep details of the agreement confidential.

In a press release, ConAgra President Greg Schlafer thanked Idaho Gov. Butch Otter for becoming personally involved in the matter and helping the companies work out some of the "difficult details" toward finding common ground.

"Our agreement fully addresses each of our prior concerns related to employee safety, emergency preparedness and air emissions," Schlafer said in the press release. "With the agreement now in place, we're confident both facilities can safely and successfully co-exist as major employers and contributors to the American Falls community."

Sorbo said Magnida is reviewing its engineering and construction bids.

The plant would use natural gas as a feedstock and produce more than a million combined tons per year of ammonia, urea, UAN and diesel exhaust fluid. It would employ about 175 workers — in addition to the 1,500-2,000 construction workers who would be needed to build the facility — and could be operational by 2017.

Farm Market Report

California Egg Reports

Compiled by USDA Market News Service • Des Moines

Shell egg marketers benchmark price for negotiated egg sales of USDA Grade AA and Grade AA in cartons, cents per dozen. This price does not reflect discounts or other contract terms.

DAILY CALIFORNIA SHELL EGGS
(USDA Market News)
Des Moines, Iowa
Dec. 24

Benchmark prices are steady. Asking prices for next week are 16 cents lower for Jumbo, 29 cents lower for Extra Large, 30 cents lower for Large and 17 cents lower for Medium and Small. Trade sentiment is steady to lower. Offerings are usually heavy. Retail demand is fairly good to instances good with warehouse buying interest in a full range of light to fairly good. Supplies are moderate to instances heavy. Market activity is moderate. Small benchmark price \$1.57.

Size	Range	Size	Range
Jumbo	230	Extra large	270
Large	267	Medium	177

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Prices to retailers, sales to volume buyers, USDA Grade AA and Grade AA, white eggs in cartons, delivered store door.

Size	Range	Size	Range
Jumbo	222-234	Extra large	251-263
Large	252-263	Medium	157-166

Grain Market Reports

Compiled by USDA Market News Service • Portland

Grains are stated in dollars per bushel or hundredweight (cwt.) except feed grains traded in dollars per ton. National grain report bids are for rail delivery unless truck indicated.

PORTLAND GRAIN
(USDA Market News)
Portland
Dec. 24

PACIFIC NORTHWEST MARKET SUMMARY

Cash wheat bids for December delivery ended the reporting week on Wednesday, Dec. 24, not available as most exporters were not issuing bids for nearby delivery.

March wheat futures ended the reporting week on Wednesday, Dec. 24, lower as follows compared to Dec. 18 closes: Chicago May futures 41.25 cents lower at \$6.1525, Kansas City 39.75 cents lower at \$6.44 and Minneapolis wheat futures trended 29.50 cents lower at \$6.3250. Chicago March corn futures trended 3.25 cents lower at \$4.0775 while January soybean futures closed \$6.25 cents lower at 10.2875.

Bids for U.S. 1 Soft White Wheat delivered to Portland in unit trains or barges during December for ordinary protein were not available as several exporters were not issuing bids for December delivery. There were no White Club Wheat premiums for ordinary protein this week. Bids for Dec. 18 for December delivery were not available.

One year ago bids for U.S. 1 Soft White Wheat any protein for December delivery by unit trains and barges to Portland were \$6.6225-6.9125, mostly \$6.7875 and bids for White Club Wheat were \$6.6225-7.4125, mostly \$7.0325.

Nearby bids for U.S. 1 Soft White wheat ordinary protein were not available for ordinary protein soft white wheat as most exporters removed their bids for nearby delivery. Forward month bids for soft white wheat ordinary protein were as follows: January \$6.85-6.8950, February \$6.8950-6.90, March \$6.8950-75, and August New Crop \$6.59-7.

One year ago, forward month bids for soft white wheat for any protein were as follows: January \$6.8625-6.9625, February \$6.9125-7.0125, March \$6.9125-7.13, and April \$7.0350-7.15.

Bids for U.S. 1 Soft White Wheat guaranteed 10.5 percent protein during December were \$7.8650. Guaranteed 10.5 percent protein bids last week for December delivery were not available. The white club wheat premiums for guaranteed 10.5 percent protein this week were 2 to 2.50 mostly 2.25, while last week's premiums were not available.

Nearby bids for U.S. 1 Soft White Wheat guaranteed 10.5 percent protein began the week on Dec. 19 at mostly 8.1025 then moved lower on Dec. 22 to mostly 8.0375, moved higher on Dec. 23 to mostly 8.1050, and on Dec. 24 moved lower to the weekly low of mostly \$7.8650. Forward month bids for soft white wheat guaranteed 10.5 percent protein were as follows: January \$7.6150-8, February \$7.6150-8.05, March \$7.6150-8.10, and August New Crop \$6.59-7.04.

Bids for 11.5 percent protein U.S. 1 Hard Red Winter Wheat for December delivery were not available as most exporters were not issuing bids for nearby delivery. On Dec. 24, forward month bids were as follows: January \$7.29-7.39, February \$7.29-7.44, March \$7.19-7.44, and August New Crop \$7.4325.

Bids for non-guaranteed 14.0 percent protein U.S. 1 Dark Northern Spring Wheat for Portland delivery for December delivery were not available as most exporters were not issuing bids for nearby delivery. On Dec. 24, bids for non-guaranteed 14 percent protein were as follows: December not available; January \$8.7250-8.8250, February \$8.7250-8.9250, March \$8.8250-9.0750, and August New Crop \$7.9675-8.1675.

COARSE FEEDING GRAINS

Bids for U.S. 2 Yellow Corn delivered to Portland in single rail cars were not available. Bids for U.S. 2 Yellow Corn truck delivered to the inland feeding areas of Yakima, Wash., and Hermiston, Ore., were also not available. Bids for U.S. 2 Heavy White Oats for December delivery held steady at \$265.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST EXPORT NEWS

There were 17 grain vessels in Columbia River ports on Wednesday, Dec. 24, with six docked compared to 16 Dec. 18 with five docked. There were no new confirmed export sales from the Commodity Credit Corporation this week.

Oregon Farm Bureau adds two members to its Hall of Fame

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Tracey Liskey, an innovator representing Klamath and Lake counties, and Ron Bjork, a pro-biotech stalwart in Jackson County's GMO debate, are the newest members of the Oregon Farm Bureau's Hall of Fame.

The men were inducted during the Farm Bureau's 82nd annual convention, held in mid-December at Glendon Beach. Membership in the Hall of Fame is considered the OFB's highest honor, which requires 35 years of involvement and nomination by the home county organization.

They are the 27th and 28th members of the hall; Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue and Executive Vice President Dave Dillon made the presentations.

Liskey, of Klamath Falls, raises hay, grain and cattle and uses geothermal heat to grow greenhouse plants. He has been an OFB member since 1978 and a board member since 1993. He is stepping down as first vice president. He's also served a term as chair of the Oregon Board of Agriculture, which advises state ag department Director Katy Caba.

Bushue praised Liskey for his ideas and energy and said he possesses a "solution-oriented perspective that many aspire to, but few attain."

Bjork, an OFB member since 1964, raises beef cattle and hay in Eagle Point. He's served as president of the Jackson County Farm Bureau three separate times. Bushue said Bjork was farming's "well-spoken and informed" representative as Jackson Coun-

ty considered a ban on biotech crops.

Bjork argued for a rational, science-based approach that preserved options for all types of farming, Bushue said.

In other news at the OFB's annual convention:

Peggy Browne of Baker County Farm Bureau was elected first vice president; Angela Bailey of Multnomah County Farm Bureau was elected second vice president and was chosen Outstanding Farm Bureau Woman. Sharon Waterman of Coos County also was named Outstanding Farm Bureau Woman.

Glenn Archambault of Jackson County and Shaun Robertson of Grant County received the Top Hand awards.

Brenda and Matt Frketch, Molly Pearmine McCargar and OFB Vice President of Public Policy Katie Fast were given the OFB's Service to Agriculture Award for their work in defeating Measure 92, which would have required GMO labeling on food.

Marie Schmidt of Yamhill County was named Outstanding Farm Bureau Secretary; the late Bob Flowers of Klamath County was honored with the Farm Bureau Memorial Award; long-time Oregonians for Food and Shelter grass roots Director Paulette Pyle won the OFB President's Award.

Retiring OFB board members Tracey Liskey, Regional Director Dale Buck of Tillamook County Farm Bureau and Regional Director KC VanNatta of Columbia County Farm Bureau were honored for their service.