

Seasonal tractor drivers received an average wage rate of \$4.27 per hour in both the orange and grapefruit industries, with an hourly rate of \$4.36 for tractor drivers in the strawberry industry. Permanent or year around tractor drivers and other machine workers received hourly wage rates above those received for seasonal workers performing similar tasks.

Most responding employers in Florida's fruit and nut industries felt that the supply of seasonal field workers in the peak week had been adequate in the past two seasons and is likely to be adequate for the 1988-89 season. However, the number and percent of employers expressing concern about inadequacy of labor supplies has risen consistently over the past three seasons.

For the orange, grapefruit, and strawberry respondents, the new Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is expected to have a substantial impact on the supply of seasonal field workers. Of the 75% of all respondents expecting IRCA to have an effect, almost all predicted that IRCA would result in decreasing the supply of workers.

Slightly over 70% of responding fruit and nut employers believed that there were some undocumented foreign workers in seasonal farm work in the 1987-88 season. Of those respondents indicating that there were some illegals, 81% believed that illegals represented less than 41% of the seasonal labor force, with very few fruit and nut respondents feeling that undocumented workers represented over 60% of the seasonal labor force.

For orange, grapefruit, and strawberry respondents, almost two-thirds expect to have problems securing an adequate supply of seasonal farm labor in the future. Respondents in the citrus and strawberry industries were concerned with increased competition for seasonal labor from the nonagricultural industries in Central and South Florida, particularly from the food service, hotel/motel, tourist, and construction industries. Also, migration of farm workers to states north of Florida in the Spring months often creates shortages of workers for Valencia orange and other harvests. Also, many respondents believe that present and future labor supplies are adversely affected by government welfare programs.

Of those fruit and nut employers who expect to have future labor supply problems, the study attempted to determine what actions employers would take to deal with the problem. The possible actions evaluated included the following: increase in wage rates, increase in labor recruitment efforts, housing for workers and their families, start or increase fringe benefits, shift to registered labor contractor, hire H-2A temporary foreign workers, join a cooperative that supplies harvest workers, adopt labor saving technology, change production to a crop requiring less labor, and/or decrease production or quit farming altogether.

#### **KEY WORDS**

Farm labor, fruits and nuts, citrus, strawberries,  
wage rates, seasonal workers, Florida