

Illegal Immigrants

At the time this survey was being conducted, qualified undocumented workers still had an opportunity to apply to become temporary resident aliens of the United States under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWs) program of IRCA. Employers were asked the question: "What percentage of seasonal field workers employed do you think are illegal immigrants?"

Data on this question were not obtained for selected fruit and nut commodities. For the fruit and nut industries, almost 30% of the respondents believed that there were no undocumented workers in the industry, with 71.2% indicating that there were at least some illegal aliens employed. This ratio of "no" illegals to "some" illegals was comparable for both fruit and nut respondents and the total of all horticultural respondents.

Of those fruit and nut 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. In contrast 18.8% of the respondents over all horticultural industries (fruit, vegetable, ornamental, and mixed farms) believed that illegals accounted for over 60% of the seasonal farm work force (Table 23). Almost 9% of these horticultural respondents thought that the rate of illegals was 81 to 100%.

Table 23. Percent Distribution of Respondents By Level of Illegal Immigrants

Type of Farm	Total Believe There is None	Total Believe There are Some	Percent Distribution of 128 Respondents Who Think There are Illegal Immigrants				
			1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Fruit & Nut	28.6	71.2	35.1	45.9	16.2	2.7	0.0
Total Average	26.4	73.6	21.9	40.7	18.8	10.2	8.6

POSSIBLE EMPLOYER ACTIONS TO DEAL WITH LABOR SUPPLY PROBLEMS

There was some degree of conformity in the outlook concerning future farm labor supplies among orange, grapefruit, and strawberry respondents. Almost two-thirds of these respondents expect to have problems securing an adequate supply of seasonal farm labor in the future. The problem is perceived to be slightly more acute in oranges when compared to strawberries (Table 24).