

Facts about seasonal farm workers in the U.S.A.*

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Facts About Seasonal Farm Workers in the USA

During peak season 1967: 1 million seasonal farm workers in U.S.A.; 200,000 seasonal farm workers in California (about 1/3 migrants and 2/3 local seasonal workers).

Average hourly wage for all farm workers (including year-round hired hands) 1967: \$1.33 for U.S.A.; \$1.62 for California.

In 1940 average hourly earnings of farm workers in California was two-thirds that of California factory workers.

In 1965 average hourly earnings of farm workers in California was 1/2 that of California factory workers.

Average annual earnings for adult male workers in California agriculture, 1965: \$1,918.00 (for families approximately \$3,000).

Average annual earnings for migrant workers in the U.S.A., 1967: \$1,307.

Wages in agriculture as compared to unskilled jobs in other industries, 1965:

	<i>Farm workers</i>	<i>Unskilled – other industries</i>
U.S.A.	1.14	2.61
California	1.42	3.05
Oregon	1.34	2.94
Texas	.98	2.48

*Compiled from statistics of U.S. Dept. of Labor, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Calif. Dept. of Employment and the Annual Report of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

Death rates of migrant farm workers as a percent of the national rates, 1967:

Infant mortality: 125 per cent higher than national rate

Maternal mortality: 125 per cent higher than national rate

Influenza and pneumonia: 200 per cent higher than national rate

Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases: 260 per cent higher than national rate

Accidents: 300 per cent higher than national rate

Life expectancy for migrants: 49 years.

Background information on the boycott of California table grapes

The Delano grape strike began in September 1965 when the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (U.F.W.O.C.), A.F.L.-C.I.O., under the leadership of César Chávez, sought union recognition for farm workers employed by California's wine grape growers. The growers refused to hold elections. Although the union represented a clear majority of the workers, it could not take advantage of the election procedures of the National Labor Relations Act since farm workers specifically excluded from the Act. Because of this, U.F.W.O.C. was forced to resort to a national consumer boycott of struck wines which resulted in contracts throughout the industry.

On August 3, 1967, the union moved against the largest California table grape grower: Giumarra Corporation, which holds 12,000 acres of land. Although 950 of the 1000 workers were out on strike, Giumarra, with the cooperation of the State Department of Labor and compliance of immigration officials, illegally replaced these workers with alien scab strike breakers, many of whom were imported from Mexico. Vicious attacks on strikers at the ranches in the Coachella Valley and a California Superior Court injunction limiting the picket to one man per entrance on these sprawling ranches reduced the strike's effectiveness.

In October 1967, the union began a nationwide consumer boycott of Giumarra. Nevertheless, Giumarra soon flooded the market with grapes bearing the labels of the struck grape growers, in violation of the advertising provisions of the Food and Drug Administration. In January 1968, the union had no other alternative but to launch an *international boycott of California table grapes*.

Public response to the boycott has been tremendous. The late Senator Robert Kennedy supported the strike from the beginning. The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Jewish Federation Council have expressed

support for the boycott (1). Former Vice-President Humphrey, Senator McCarthy and Senator McGovern have endorsed the strike and the boycott. The mayors of New York, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburg, and Boston have taken similar action. Inter-faith action committees of all religious denominations have been formed around the country to support the grape strike. The A.F.L.-C.I.O., the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and the Canadian Labor Congress passed resolutions supporting the informational boycott and requested their members not to buy grapes.

In spite of these pressures, the grape growers are determined to deny the rights of collective bargaining to farm workers. They have refused to hold elections, meet with union representatives, and rejected efforts by the Bishop of Fresno, the City Council of Fresno, the California State Conciliation Service, and the Mayor of San Francisco to mediate the strike. Furthermore, California Governor Ronald Reagan has joined forces with the state's multi-million dollar agricultural industry and ordered state agencies to gather facts so that steps may be taken to stop the boycott.

The Delano grape strike and U.F.W.O.C.'s efforts to build a non-violent, poor people's movement and union are entering a critical period after four years of striking.

The farm worker is America's forgotten man. He is not protected by health and pension plans, receives no unemployment insurance or workmen's compensation when he is injured on the job, and is excluded from most minimum wage legislation. Working in the 100 degree sun, he earns an average \$1,800 a year and watches his children drop out of school to enter the fields. U.F.W.O.C. is the first organization that has successfully forced agribusiness to provide farm workers with a living wage and dignified working conditions. In these fields where the Grapes of Wrath are grown, the farm workers and César Chávez are engaged in an epic struggle against the masters of the land.

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The General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Jewish Federation Council have adopted, in autumn 1968, resolutions in support of farm workers. Following are extracts of these three statements :

(a) By the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (N.C.C.C.U.S.A.) :

"Whereas: The General Board of the N.C.C.C.U.S.A. has declared that "the nature of the Church requires that as an economic institution it consider the social impact of its purchasing decisions in terms of justice and equity"; and has further declared that "when convincing evidence of exploitation, discrimination or other antisocial behavior on the part of a producer or vendor has been discovered by the Church or brought to its attention, these circumstances make it imperative that the Church should make its purchasing decisions with due regard for these facts;

(1) Extracts of their resolutions are published hereunder.

and whereas: Farm workers are unfairly singled out in the language of the National Labor Relations Act for exclusion from the union certification and collective bargaining procedures under the National Labor Relations Board, an exclusion which the National Council of Churches has denounced and sought to eliminate by working for the amendment of the National Labor Relations Act:

and whereas: Through the field operations and field contacts of the Division of Christian Life and Mission and of the California Migrant Ministry over the past several years convincing evidence has been accumulated that the cause of the California farm workers, organized in the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, demanding union recognition and the right of collective bargaining, is a just cause, and that the resistance to the demands of U.F.W.O.C. by growers of California table grapes constitutes a denial of social justice and provides the basis for continued exploitation of farm workers;

therefore, be it resolved: That the N.C.C.C.U.S.A., including its several units, refrain from the purchase or use of California table grapes until such time as union recognition and assurance of good faith collective bargaining are granted by the California growers;

and be it further resolved: That the General Board offers this action and the reason for it to councils of churches, communions, church agencies and church-related institutions and to Christians and men of good will for their consideration and study as they determine their own religious witness in this situation."

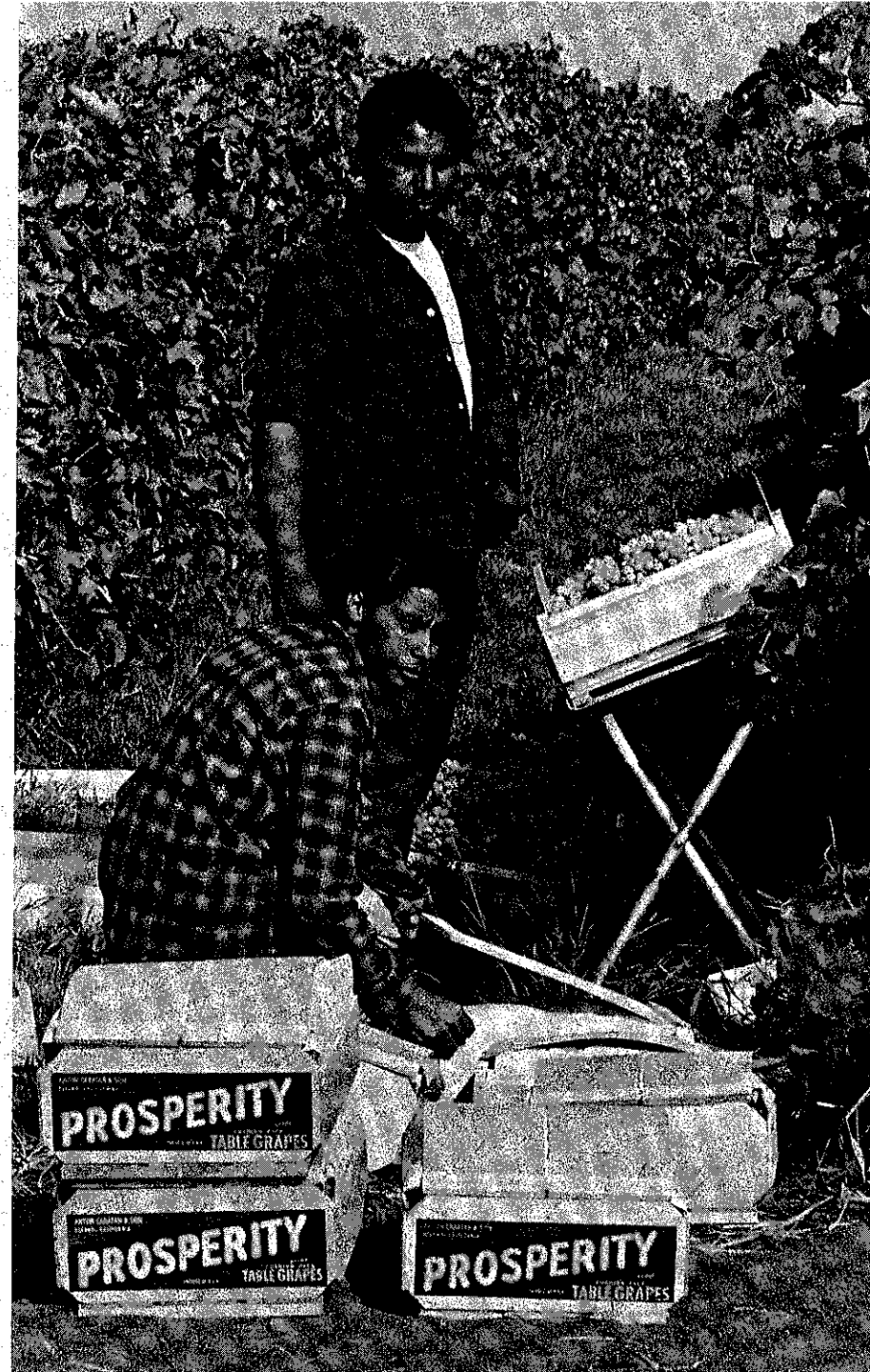
(b) By the National Conference of Catholic Bishops :

"We, the Catholic bishops of the United States, address ourselves to this problem with the hope of assisting in a reconciliation between grower and worker. ... The conflict that began in California is now spreading throughout the nation and is clearly a national issue. Farm workers demanding legislative protection for their natural right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining. They are demanding inclusion under a law which has protected the bargaining rights of other American workers for thirty-three years, namely the National Labor Relations Act.

... We are aware that the small grower is often the victim of circumstances beyond his control, that his sincere willingness to pay higher wages meets with obstacles which he cannot overcome without a realistic coordination of all his strengths. We urge him to examine his situation carefully in order to see that his so-called independence is unreal and could result in his vanishing from the American economy... To protect himself, his interests, and the interests of the farm work force, we plead with him to unite with his fellow farmers and growers in associations proper to themselves. At the same time we wish to note that throughout this century, our state and federal governments have done much to assist growers and farmers with their difficulties. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said for the men working in the fields.

Catholic bishops in several of the states most deeply affected by the current crisis in the farm labor have already addressed themselves to the need for federal legislation to provide machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes between growers and farm workers. In

Prosperity for whom?
(Photo: George Ballis)



- 4) The farm workers have organized as have other workers knowing they can present their just grievances best when they are united. The growers have circumvented the strike effort of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee by importing workers from Mexico, Texas and other areas. The growers have created a situation where the poorest, the imported workers, are robbing the poor of their livelihood. This is cruel and harsh as well as immoral.
- 5) The growers and the owners refuse to meet with the U.F.W.O.C. at any place or any time. The workers have appeared at designated meetings but no growers or owners. We believe it is incumbent upon all fair-minded individuals to discuss the legitimate grievances with those who raise them.
- 6) On our part we cannot indifferently remain silent or inactive when our fellow human beings are deprived and ignored. As others have helped us at some point in history in our outreach for a better life we must help those on the lower rungs of the ladder of human achievement. The greatness of our country lies in the sympathy and support each of us renders to our fellow citizens. The true meaning of our Jewish tradition rests in the effort we put forth to secure justice and righteousness as the foundation stones of our civilization.

We do call upon all of our congregation and all Jews in the United States who understand and agree with our statement to join with us in support of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee."

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FRESH GRAPES : Exports (in lbs.) (1) from the United States 1964 - 1967 (2)

	1964	1965	1966	1967
TOTAL	195,368,711	247,538,516	252,950,207	246,876,693
VALUE U.S.\$	19,166,342	22,711,608	25,252,774	25,665,727
Major countries of destination				
Canada	163,116,906	206,335,420	194,963,039	210,587,377
Venezuela	8,423,957	9,689,220	11,785,381	7,915,894
Phillippine Rep.	4,017,738	4,985,939	7,726,188	4,209,844
Hong Kong	5,967,174	6,284,558	8,044,472	3,757,349
United Kingdom	3,317,934	4,008,542	8,990,952	2,946,412
Netherlands	69,169	872,444	383,003	1,910,555
Sweden	762,022	1,721,118	3,742,427	1,850,008
Panama	1,047,231	1,351,560	1,454,345	1,212,869
South Vietnam	303,905	244,952	331,062	1,194,988
Mexico	1,529,374	2,066,707	1,934,000	1,144,471
Norway	1,154,935	1,206,690	1,076,316	1,120,464
Singapore	—	—	1,723,310	1,117,105
Brazil	—	—	440,544	1,056,132
Guatemala	148,028	609,298	688,310	1,022,392
Dominican Rep.	643,854	863,363	550,653	686,444
Denmark	—	96,100	318,300	534,237
Bahamas	161,777	304,511	796,133	510,757
Trinidad	544,827	604,312	697,934	404,757
Ireland	365,443	368,680	677,101	399,757
Jamaica	349,403	427,525	462,319	318,757
Costa Rica	281,460	304,890	297,935	310,757
France	5,100	—	—	149,576
Finland	474,000	635,209	761,727	144,677
Guyana	—	—	—	159,677
Neth. Antilles	142,629	109,876	218,203	140,677
Honduras	105,702	177,329	196,610	13,677
Malaysia	—	924,775	188,845	—
Bermuda	115,963	126,601	123,926	—
British Honduras	87,328	109,658	116,416	—
West Germany	34,000	197,200	501,931	—
New Zealand	264,276	274,040	265,447	—
Japan	54,149	—	108,269	—
Liberia	42,346	—	—	—
Australia	13,600	—	—	—

(1) 1 lb. = kg. 0.4536

(2) U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Exports - Schedule R, Commodity and Country*, Report FT 410.