

LOUISIANA'S MIGRANT FARM WORKER POPULATION:
A PARISH BY PARISH ESTIMATION STUDY EXAMINING
AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDS

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Agricultural Health and Safety Needs**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING MFW IN LOUISIANA	2
III. STUDY METHODOLOGY	5
V. RESULTS	6
VI. DISCUSSION	28
VII. CONCLUSION	32
VIII. REFERENCES	33
IX. APPENDICES	35

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1	MFW Estimates, Population, Crop Data and Agricultural Peaks for All Parishes in Louisiana
TABLE 2	All Parishes with MFW, Estimates, Population, Crop Data and Agricultural Peaks
TABLE 3	All parishes with over 100 MFW, Estimates, Population, Crop Data and Agricultural Peaks
TABLE 4	Race/Ethnicity and Language of MFW by Parish
TABLE 5A	Parishes Reporting MFW Families
TABLE 5B	Parishes Reporting MFW Single Males
TABLE 6A	Health and Safety Issues by Parish, emphasizing MFW
TABLE 6B	Health and Safety Issues by Parish, emphasizing MFW Families
TABLE 7	Parishes Reporting MFW, Type of Crop, Type of Labor and Time of Year Performed

LIST OF FIGURES

- FIGURE 1 NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS SURVEY
(NAWS) Profile of Approximately 2 million Seasonal
Agricultural Service(SAS) Farm Workers: 1989-1991
- FIGURE 2 Estimates by Agricultural Extension Agents of
Migrant Farm Workers by Parish, In Louisiana 1995
- FIGURE 3 Parishes Reporting Machinery Related Injury

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Resource Guide: LSU Cooperative Extension Services and
Agricultural Agents

APPENDIX B Telephone Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION

Migrant farm workers (MFW) are a crucial sector of the work force in Louisiana, helping to bring to the market and the table a wide range of agricultural products. Yet migrant farm workers may be a forgotten or underserved sector when it comes to health care access and social services. In order to better serve the state's MFW population, it is crucial to establish a demographic picture of migrant farm workers in Louisiana.

The primary objective of the study summarized in this report is to obtain a state-wide estimation of MFW population by parish in Louisiana. A secondary objective is to highlight agricultural health and safety issues with respect to the type of labor performed in each parish.

This study was designed after reviewing the available data on MFW in the state of Louisiana. The methodology employed was to seek estimates of MFW in each parish from agricultural extension agents assigned to each parish. Given their availability, accessibility and extensive knowledge base, agricultural extension agents are a valuable resource for meeting the study's objectives. The agents work directly with farmers to help solve the problems of crops, soils, livestock, poultry, farm machinery, buildings and forestry (LSU Agricultural Center, 1994). The vast scope of their work puts them in a position useful for this study's purposes. Interviews with agricultural extension agents provided information on numerical estimations of MFW, demographics, health and safety issues, the kinds of work performed by MFW, and seasonal changes in agricultural production.

Agricultural extension agents are employed as the educational/informational branch of the Louisiana State University (LSU) Agricultural Center. The LSU Agricultural Center defines its focus as helping people of Louisiana improve their lives through an educational process that

uses research-based knowledge focused on issues and needs. There are eight different types of extension agents assigned to each parish. These agents cover the following areas: horticulture, agriculture, home economics, urban gardening programs, expanded food and nutrition education program (EFNEP), fisheries, energy and 4-H youth. They are funded by grants from the federal government through LSU, which is the land grant university for Louisiana.

Additionally, professionals at local, state and federal levels provided insight into the realities of MFW living in Louisiana. The issues for further clarification included: legal status; contract labor; dependents status; educational status of migrant farm children, and health care/service provider interaction. The following is a list of professions and institutions consulted: Union Parish Health Unit; Agricultural Soil Conservation Service; Public Health Advisors from the Centers for Disease Control; Louisiana's State Agrability Program; The Easter Seal Society of Louisiana; Tangipahoa Parish Health Unit; The Department of Research and Statistics for the State of Louisiana Department of Labor; State of Louisiana Department of Migrant Education; Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) personnel; Farm Workers Legal Assistance Project, and Motivation, Education and Training (MET) project.

IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING THE MFW POPULATION IN LOUISIANA

Migrant Farm Workers are defined as individuals who cannot return to their normal homes at night, and who live in temporary abodes while performing farm labor (Martin, 1988). The MFW population in the state of Louisiana is characterized by two migrant streams. These streams include the Eastern Stream, whose homebase is southern Florida, and also the Midwestern Stream, whose homebase is southern Texas (AHEC, 1993).

According to a recent study conducted by the Southeastern Louisiana Action for Rural Child Health (SEARCH), 90% of MFW are Hispanic-Latino migrant workers of Mexican descent (AHEC, 1993). This pattern tends to prevail in other states' studies of the MFW population. Refugio Rochin, of the National Rural Studies Committee, cites this trend as consistent throughout the country. He argues that U.S. agriculture is going through a phase of "Mexicanization" instead of the predicted "mechanization" of the 1970's and 1980's (Rochin, 1992).

For the purposes of the present study, telephone interviews with agricultural extension agents were designed to gather information specifically about the migratory patterns of the MFW population. Louisiana is a largely rural state with a very diverse agricultural industry. The time of year at which a group of migrants pass through a particular part of the state is dependent upon the type of agriculture located there. Louisiana has a tropical climate which provides some form of agricultural work on a year-round basis. Therefore, the time of year and length of time this population will spend in a particular parish varies greatly, depending on the type of crop produced.

Farm work has changed in Louisiana much in the same way it has throughout the country. This change is largely due to the mechanization of many crops. The number of workers needed in agriculture has been declining, and will probably continue to due to the process of mechanization of agricultural production. However, harvesting labor-intensive crops which are not conducive to mechanization maintains a demand for low cost farm labor (Slesinger et al., 1992).

This holds true especially in the case of Louisiana, because the parishes with the most

labor-intensive crops tend to have the greatest concentration of MFW in the state. A detailed breakdown of this phenomenon is illustrated in Table 1. Labor-intensive crops are generally fruits and vegetables such as cucumbers, strawberries, tomatoes and peppers. Tangipahoa Parish has the largest concentration of these types of crops in the state (Calhoun, 1995).

Other types of agricultural industry in this state that have high demands for migrant labor are forestry, poultry, sugarcane, and cotton. These types of agricultural industries are characterized by high job turnover, low wages, shift work, limited medical and pension benefits, and the risk of crippling injury (Griffin, 1990). These types of industry do not attract local workers, and therefore utilize migrant labor.

One of the trends noted is that highly mechanized crops tend to need fewer laborers, and are characterized by employing single, male workers. The more labor-intensive crop farms tend to supply housing for migrant workers. In these kinds of settings, migrant families were found to be prevalent.

Trends in Louisiana are consistent with findings in the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), conducted on a bi-annual basis to determine the demographics of the nation's MFW population. Figure 1 shows results of this survey. The purpose of the current study is to arrive at a more precise definition of the demographics of Louisiana's MFW population.

Figure 1
NAWS Profile of Approximately 2 Million Seasonal Agricultural Service(SAS) Farm Workers: 1989-1991

Demographic Characteristics: Most farm workers are male, young, married, and immigrants with a Seasonal Agricultural Worker(SAW) status: Source: Richard Mines, et al., Findings from the NAWS 1990 (Washington: U.S. DOL, Office of Program Economics), Research Report Number 1, 1991 and additional data analysis.

- ◆ 73 % are male; 67 % are 35 or younger (median age 31); but 17 % are 20 or younger.
- ◆ 58 % are married; 52% have children, but 40% do farm work unaccompanied by their families
- ◆ 60 % are foreign born, including 55 % who were born in Mexico
- ◆ 70 % are Hispanic
- ◆ 29 % are SAWs (580,000 of an estimated 2 million), and they have a median 7 years of U.S. farm work experience
- ◆ 10 % are unauthorized (200,000 of 2 million) and these young workers (median age 23) have only 2 years of U.S. farm work experience.
- ◆ 53 % of all SAS workers have 8 or fewer years of education (median 8 years); 65 percent speak primarily Spanish

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The researchers conducted telephone interviews with agricultural extension agents in parishes throughout Louisiana. This methodology was chosen after reviewing methods used in California (Martin, 1994), Kentucky (Kentucky, 1994), and the Federal Migrant Enumeration Project (Larson et al., 1993). All MFW numbers derived in this study are estimates.

Telephone interviews, approximately twenty minutes in length, sought data from agricultural extension agents in sixty-two of Louisiana's sixty-four parishes. This interview method was chosen after review of the literature, and determined to be most effective based on other such studies conducted throughout the country. For example Martin suggests using estimations from experts on the front lines as one of the best ways of gaining relatively accurate insight into MFW population size (Martin, 1994).

The interview schedule was designed to explore five areas of the MFW population: (1) numerical estimation, (2) demographics, (3) agricultural health and safety issues,

(4) specific agricultural jobs performed by MFW, and (5) peak seasons of migrant labor.

RESULTS

A summation of the data obtained from the answers to each of the telephone survey questions follows.

Question 1: What is your estimate of the MFW population in your parish?

Of the 62 agricultural extension agents interviewed, 26 estimated that there were no MFW in their parishes; 12 estimated that there were from 1-25; 6 estimated between 26-50; 3 estimated between 51-75; 6 estimated 76-99; 1 estimated 201-300; 2 estimated 401-500; 1 estimated 901-1000; and one estimated over 1000.

A number of explanations were offered about the absence of migrant workers, in those parishes where none were noted:

- ◆ the use of mechanized farm machinery;
- ◆ access to inmate labor (this applied specifically to West Feliciana, which is close to Angola State Prison, which grows labor-intensive crops on prison grounds, with inmates maintaining the crops);
- ◆ continued years of a bad economy causing locals to do farm labor, or reducing small farmers' ability to afford migrant labor;
- ◆ communities of small family farms;
- ◆ agricultural industry that attracts labor year-round thus providing stable employment for locals;
- ◆ no agricultural industry.

Following is a list of illustrations to further elucidate the points made in the manuscript:

Figure 2 Map of the state of Louisiana.

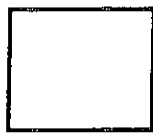
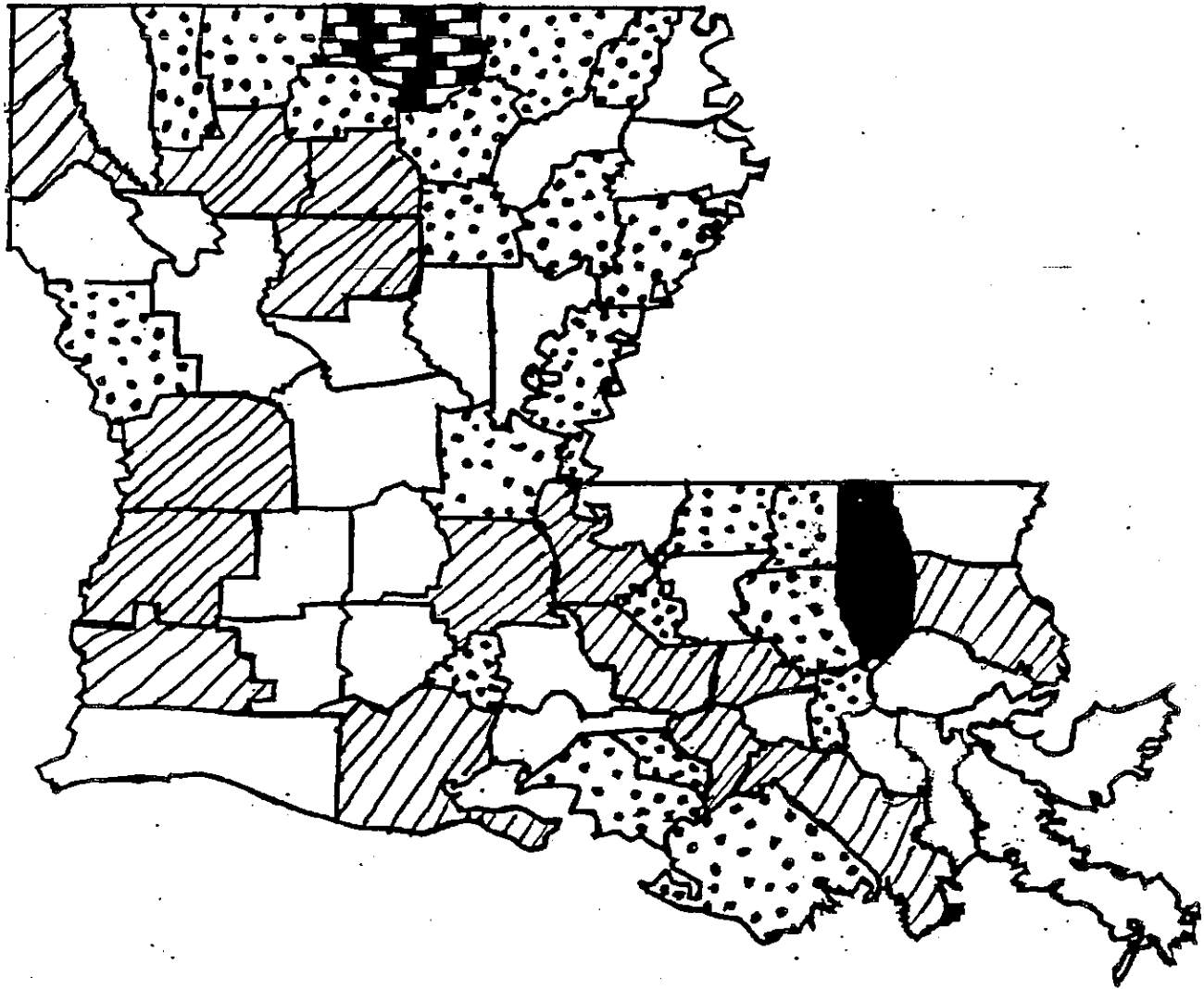
This map demonstrates MFW numbers, by parish, as estimated by the agricultural extension agents. Tangipahoa Parish stands out as the parish with the largest number of MFW.

Table 1 MFW population estimates reported by parishes.

Table 2 Parishes with MFW population estimates.

Table 3 Parishes with MFW population estimates greater than or equal to 100.

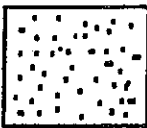
FIGURE 2
Estimates by Agricultural Extension Agents of
Migrant Farm Workers by Parish, Louisiana 1995



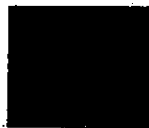
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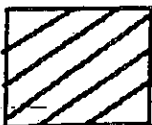
501-1000



1-99



1000+



100-500

8

MIGRANT FARM WORKERS BY PARISH

Table 1
MFW Estimates, Population, Crop Data,
and Agricultural Peaks by Parish

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Acadia	55882	0	rice, soybeans	none	n/a
Allen	21,226	0	rice, timber	none	n/a
Ascension	58,214	125	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
Assumption	22,753	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Avoyelles	39,159	25-30	sugarcane, sweet potatoes	sugarcane, sweet potatoes	Sept.-Nov.
Beauregard	30,083	500	dairy, forestry, beef-cattle	forestry	variable throughout year
Bienville	15,979	100-200	forestry, Watermelon	forestry	Dec.-Feb.
Bossier	86,088	0	cotton, soybean, cattle, forestry	none	n/a
Caddo	248,253	100	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Nov.
Calsieu	168,134	0	none	none	n/a
Caldwell	9,810	15-20	cotton	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Cameron	9,260	0	rice, cattle, fishery	none	n/a
Catahoula	11,065	0	cotton, soybeans, feed grain, livestock	none	n/a
Claiborne	17,405	68	poultry, dairy	poultry	variable throughout year
Concordia	20,828	15-30	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Oct.
Desoto	25,346	0	dairy, forestry	none	n/a
East Baton Rouge	380,105	0	peaches, cotton, sugarcane, tomatoes, soybeans	none, these are all small family farms	n/a

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
East Carroll	9,709	0	cotton, rice, soybeans	none	n/a
East Feliciana	19,211	4	ostrich, cattle, forestry, sweet potatoes	sweet potatoes, ostriches	Sept.-Nov.
Evangeline	33,274	0	sweet potatoes, rice, soybeans, wheat	none	n/a
Franklin	22,387	10-12	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Dec.
Grant	17,526	0	cotton	none	n/a
Iberia	68,297	0	sugarcane	none	n/a
Iberville	31,049	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Jackson	15,705	75-100	forestry	forestry	Jan.-Mar.
Jefferson	448,306	0	none	none	n/a
Jefferson Davis	30,722	0	cattle, rice, soybeans	none	n/a
Lafayette	164,762	25-50	sugarcane, soybeans, crawfish	sugarcane	Sept.-Nov.
LaFourche	85,860	150	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
LaSalle	13,662	0	cotton, timber	none	n/a
Lincoln	41,745	12	dairy, poultry, peaches	peaches	Sept.-Oct.
Livingston	70,526	75	strawberries, peppers, cucumber, livestock	strawberries, peppers, cucumbers	Feb.-May
Madison	12,463	0	cotton, soybeans, rice	none	n/a
Morehouse	31,938	25	cotton, rice	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Natchitoches	36,689	0	cotton, corn, soybeans	none	n/a
Orleans	496,938	0	none	none	n/a

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Ouachita	142,191	15-20	cotton	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Plaquemines	25,575	0	none	none	n/a
Pointe Coupee	22,540	200-250	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Rapides	131,556	0	nurseries	none	n/a
Red River	9,387	0	cattle, forestry, soybeans, corn	none	n/a
Richland	20,629	0	cotton, rice	none	n/a
Sabine	22,646	20-50	poultry	poultry	variable throughout year
St. Bernard	66,631	0	none	none	n/a
St. Charles	42,437	0	none	none	n/a
St. Helena	9,874	5-10	poultry	poultry	variable throughout year
St. James	20,879	0	sugarcane	none	n/a
St. John	39,996	12-20	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
St. Landry	80,331	50-100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Nov.
St. Martin	43,978	45	crawfish, Sugarcane	crawfish	Sept.-Nov.
St. Mary	58,086	5	sugarcane, soybeans	sugarcane	variable throughout year
St. Tammany	144,508	500	emu, livestock, cattle	emu	variable throughout year
Tangipahoa	85,709	3000	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	Feb.-May (straw.&pepper) June-Sept. (cucu.&toma.)
Tensas	7,103	50	cotton	cotton	Sept-Oct.
Terrebonne	96,982	20	sugarcane	sugarcane	July-Sept.
Union	20,690	1000	forestry, swine, cattle, poultry	forestry, poultry	variable throughout year
Vermillion	50,055	50-100	sugarcane, cattle	sugarcane	Sept.-Nov.

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Vernon	61,961	0	none	none	n/a
Washington	43,185	0	dairy, watermelon	none, use local school children to pick crop	n/a
Webster	41,989	15-20	dairy, hayfarming, cotton	cotton	June-July
W.Baton Rouge	19,419	20-25	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
West Carroll	19,419	50-60	sweet potatoes, cotton	sweet potatoes	Aug.-Oct.
West Feliciana	12,915	0	forestry, beef-cattle	none	n/a
Winn	16,269	200	forestry	forestry	variable throughout year
TOTAL	4,219,973	7,076			

Source: Column Two, Population Sizes by Parish, M. Calhoun, *Louisiana Almanac 1995-96*, Pelican Publishing Co., Gretna, La., 1995.

Table 2
Parishes with MFW

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Ascension	58,214	125	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
Assumption	22,753	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Avoyelles	39,159	25-30	sugarcane, sweet potatoes	sugarcane, sweet potatoes	Sept.-Nov.
Beauregard	30,083	500	dairy, forestry, beef-cattle	forestry	variable throughout year
Bienville	159,79	100-200	forestry, watermelon	forestry	Dec.-Feb.
Caddo	248,253	100	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Nov.
Caldwell	9,810	15-20	cotton	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Claiborne	17,405	68	poultry, dairy	poultry	variable throughout year
Concordia	20,828	15-30	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Oct.
East Feliciana	19,211	4	ostrich, cattle, forestry, sweet potatoes	sweet potatoes, ostriches	Sept.-Nov.
Franklin	22,387	10-12	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Dec.
Iberville	31,049	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Jackson	15,705	75-100	Forestry	Forestry	Jan.-Mar.
Lafayette	164,762	25-50	sugarcane, soybeans, crawfish	sugarcane	Sept.-Nov.
LaFourche	85,860	150	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
Lincoln	41,745	12	dairy, poultry, peaches	peaches	Sept.-Oct.
Livingston	70,526	75	strawberries, peppers, cucumber, livestock	strawberries, peppers, cucumbers	Feb.-May

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Morehouse	31,938	25	cotton, rice	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Ouachita	142,191	15-20	cotton	cotton	Aug.-Dec.
Pointe Coupee	22,540	200-250	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Sabine	22,646	20-50	poultry	poultry	variable throughout year
St. Helena	9,874	5-10	poultry	poultry	variable throughout year
St. John	39,996	12-20	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
St. Landry	80,331	50-100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Nov.
St. Martin	43,978	45	crawfish, sugarcane	crawfish	Sept.-Nov.
St. Mary	58,086	5	sugarcane, soybeans	sugarcane	Variable throughout year
St. Tammany	144,508	500	emu, livestock, cattle	emu	variable throughout year
Tangipahoa	85,709	3000	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	Feb.-May (straw.&pepper) June-Sept. (cucu.&toma.)
Tensas	7,103	50	cotton	cotton	Sept-Oct.
Terrebonne	96,982	20	sugarcane	sugarcane	July-Sept.
Union	20,690	1000	forestry, swine, cattle, poultry	forestry, poultry	variable throughout year
Vermillion	50,055	50-100	sugarcane, cattle	sugarcane	Sept.-Nov.
Webster	41,989	15-20	dairy, hayfarming, cotton	cotton	June-July
W.Baton Rouge	19,419	20-25	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
West Carroll	19,419	50-60	sweet potatoes, cotton	sweet potatoes	Aug.-Oct.
Winn	16,269	200	forestry	forestry	variable throughout year

Table 3
Parishes with MFW Estimates of 100 or more

PARISH	POPULATION SIZE	MFW ESTIMATES	TYPE OF CROPS	CROPS WORKED BY MIGRANT LABORERS	AGRICULTURAL PEAKS
Ascension	58,214	125	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
Assumption	22,753	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Beauregard	30,083	500	dairy, forestry, beef-cattle	forestry	variable throughout year
Bienville	15,979	100-200	forestry, Watermelon	forestry	Dec.-Feb.
Caddo	248,253	100	cotton	cotton	Sept.-Nov.
Iberville	31,049	100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
Jackson	15,705	75-100	forestry	forestry	Jan.-Mar.
LaFourche	85,860	150	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Dec.
Pointe Coupee	22,540	200-250	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Oct.
St. Landry	80,331	50-100	sugarcane	sugarcane	Aug.-Nov.
St. Tammany	144,508	500	emu, livestock, cattle	emu	variable throughout year
Tangipahoa	85,709	3000	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries	Feb.-May (straw.&pepper) June-Sept. (cucu.&toma.)
Union	20,690	1000	forestry,swine, cattle,poultry	forestry,poultry	variable throughout year
Vermillion	50,055	50-100	sugarcane, cattle	sugarcane	Sept.-Nov.
Winn	16,269	200	forestry	forestry	variable throughout year

Question 2: What is the race/ethnicity of the MFW population in your parish?

Of the 36 parishes that reported MFW populations; 90% stated that MFW in their parishes were Hispanic-Latino migrant workers of Mexican descent. One extension agent interviewed identified the migrant population to be Asian migrant workers of Vietnamese descent. That parish was St. Martin.

The following comment offers anecdotal evidence of what occurred with Vietnamese migrants in Plaquemines and Cameron Parishes, according to agricultural agents there. In the local fishing industry, individuals became independent contractors through securing loans from the federal government. This is a lucrative, stable industry and as such has stabilized, offering reliable income. Vietnamese laborers stay in the fishing industry, establish residency and legal status. Children of this ethnic group attend school in Louisiana. There are large pockets of Vietnamese communities whose livelihood revolves around the fishing industry.

Table 4 shows the race/ethnicity and language of the MFW population by parish.

TABLE 4

PARISH	RACE/ETHNICITY	Do extension agents view lack of access to culturally & linguistically sensitive literature & services as a problem?	LANGUAGE
Ascension	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Assumption	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Beauregard	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Bienville	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Caddo	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Caldwell	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Claiborne	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish

PARISH	RACE/ETHNICITY	Do extension agents view lack of access to culturally & linguistically sensitive literature & services as a problem?	LANGUAGE
Concordia	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
East Feliciana	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Franklin	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Iberville	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Jackson	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Lafayette	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
LaFourche	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Lincoln	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Livingston	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Morehouse	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Ouachita	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Pointe Coupee	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Sabine	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
St. Helena	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
St. John	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Avoyelles	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
St. Landry	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
St. Martin	Asian/Vietnamese	No	Vietnamese
St. Tammany	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Tangipahoa	Hispanic/Latino	Yes	Spanish
Tensas	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Terrebonne	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Union	Hispanic/Latino	Yes	Spanish
Vermillion	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Webster	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
West Baton Rouge	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
West Carroll	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
Winn	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish
St. Mary	Hispanic/Latino	No	Spanish

Question 3: What language do the majority of these MFW speak?

Of the 36 parishes with MFW, 35 stated Spanish and one stated Vietnamese.

Question 4: Do you view lack of access to culturally and linguistically sensitive literature and services as a problem?

Of the 36 extension agents who stated use of the MFW in their parish, only Union and Tangipahoa agents saw lack of access as a problem.

Question 5: What is the sex and marital status of MFW in your parish?

Of the 36 extension agents who acknowledge migrant farm laborers, 100% stated that MFW were male.

Forty-one percent (15 of 36) stated that MFW bring their families. Agents from the following 15 parishes stated this: Ascension, Assumption, Beauregard, Claiborne, Iberville, Jackson, LaFourche, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Union and Winn.

Fifty-eight percent (21 of 36) stated MFW are single males. Agents from the following 21 parishes noted this : Avoyelles, Bienville, Caddo, Caldwell, Concordia, East Feliciana, Franklin, Lafayette, Lincoln, Morehouse, Ouachita, Sabine, St. Helena, St. John, St. Mary, Tensas, Terrebonne, Vermillion, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll and Webster.

There is a distinct trend in the data: the larger the MFW population in a particular parish and the more stable the work, the greater the likelihood that families, as opposed to single men, migrate to that area.

A number of other dynamics were also noted. They include:

- ◆ The issue of single males may be of concern to practitioners in public health. A study of MFW in the eastern stream examining significant risk factors for the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), (Lafferty, 1990), found this population to have the following risk factors: sexual promiscuity, frequenting prostitutes, homosexual behavior, sexual intercourse with multiple partners and intercourse without a condom.
- ◆ The remaining parishes, with the exception of St. Martin, with Vietnamese-migrant families, all have populations of 100 MFW or more.

TABLE 5A
Parishes Reporting MFW Families

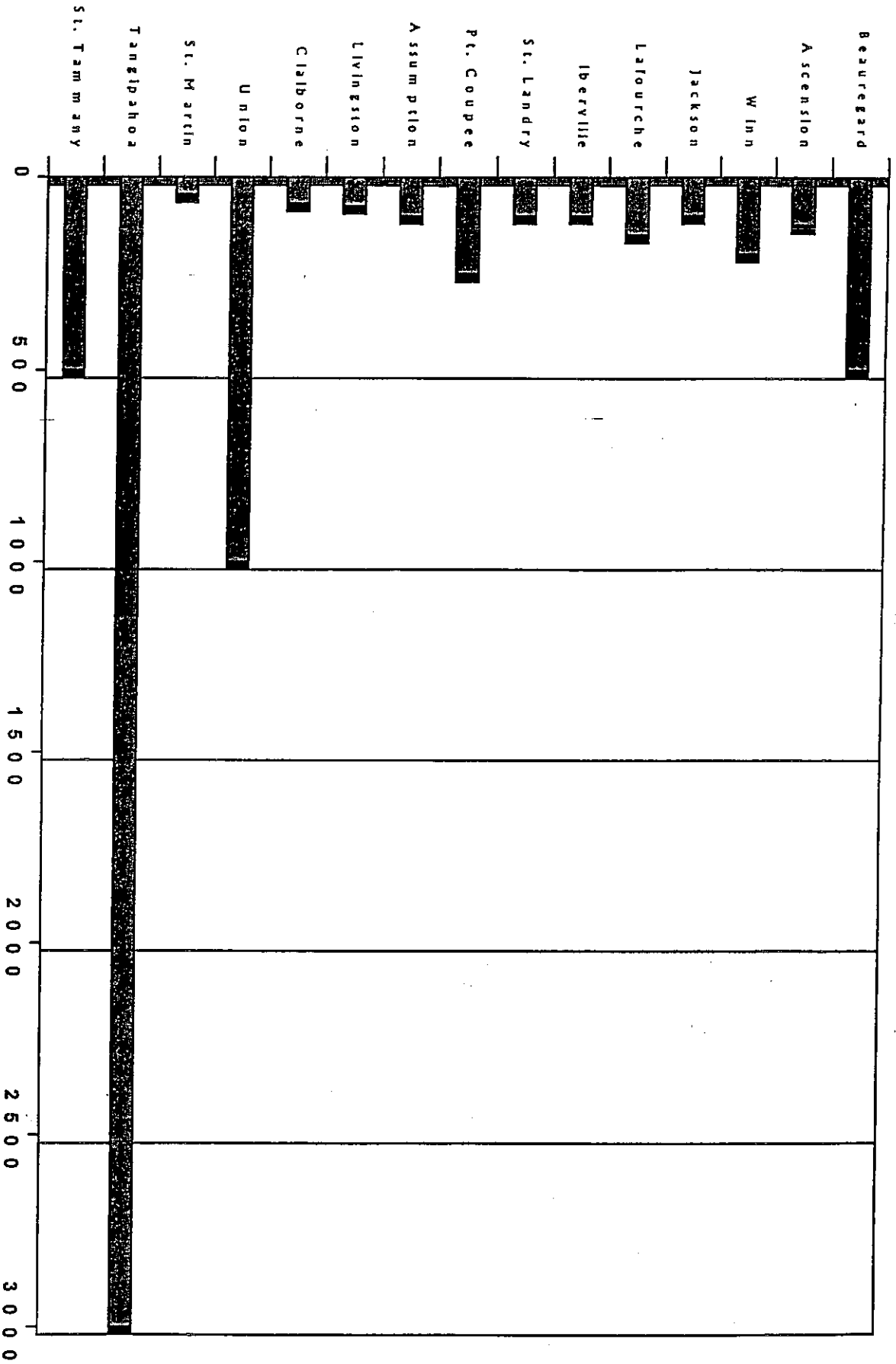
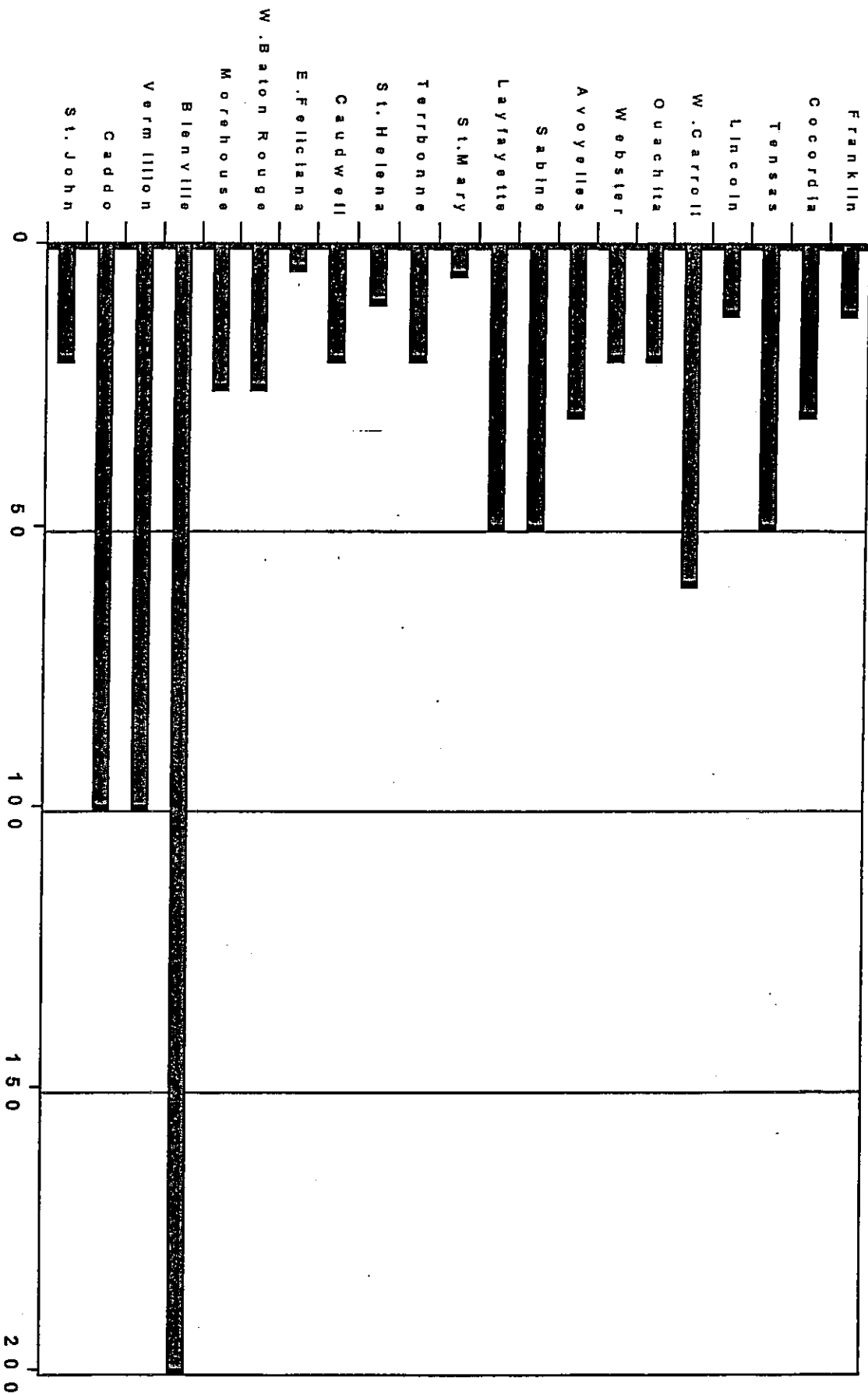


TABLE 5B
Parishes Reporting MFW Single Males



Question 6: Do children work in the fields?

Of the 36 respondents who indicated the presence of MFW, all stated that no children work in the fields.

Three parishes (2 of which reported no MFW in the parish) stated that local school children work in the watermelon fields during summer vacation as summer employment. The parishes were East Baton Rouge, Bienville, and Washington.

Question 7: What agricultural health and safety issues are you aware of?

Of thirty-six respondents, from parishes with MFW, fifteen (41%) mentioned agricultural and safety issues to be a problem. (Table 6A details health and safety issues that specifically affect MFW, and Table 6B details health and safety issues that specifically affect MFW families).

The data suggest that these are two separate issues and must be dealt with in different ways. As table 6B illustrates, family issues were identified by agricultural agents in two of the fifteen parishes, Tangipahoa and Union. These parishes report the highest estimates of MFW and, according to the State Department of Migrant Education have the highest number of migrant children enrolled in public schools (Osterthaler, 1995). These two parishes also represent the largest numbers of migrant children who come into public health units for immunizations in order to attend school (Bradley, 1995).

Table 6A shows that two most commonly cited health and safety issues in the majority of parishes are a lack of translators and lack of warning information. This finding calls into question other data (see question 4 and Table 4). In response to the question, "Do you view lack of access to culturally and linguistically sensitive literature and services as a problem?"

Thirty-four agricultural agents reported that this issue was not a problem. This merits further investigation.

Table 6A
Health and Safety (H & S) Issues by Parish,
Emphasizing MFW

MFW H&S ISSUE	A S C E N S I O N	A S S U M P T I O N	B E A U R E G A R D	B I E N V I L L E	C A D D O	I B E R V I L L E	J A C K S O N	L A F O U R C H E	P O I N T E C O U P E E	S T A M M A N Y	S T L A N D R Y	T A N G I P A H O A	U N I O N	V E R M I L L I O N	W I N N	T O T A L
LACK OF TRANSLATORS	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		10
LACK OF WARNING INFORMATION IN APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE	X	X	X		X	X		X	X					X	X	9
LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY TO HEALTH CARE		X		X	X		X	X			X				X	7
SAWMILL FACTORY INJURIES			X										X		X	3
ALCOHOL ABUSE				X			X									2
LOWER BACK PROBLEMS						X	X		X					X		4
ADAPTING TO H&S ISSUES INVOLVING EMU'S										X						1
EXPOSURE TO PESTICIDES												X				1

TABLE 6B
Health and Safety Issues by Parish,
with Emphasis on MFW Families

MFW H&S ISSUE RELATING TO FAMILIES	TANGIPAHOA	UNION	TOTAL
DIABETES AMONG PREGNANT MFW WIVES	X		1
HIGH RATE OF PREGNANCY	X		1
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)	X		1
LOW INFANT BIRTHWEIGHT	X		1
RINGWORM AMONG CHILDREN	X	X	2
NO CURRENT IMMUNIZATION AMONG CHILDREN	X	X	2
LACK OF UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITY	X	X	2
HEADLICE AMONG CHILDREN	X		1

Question 8: Are machinery-related injuries a problem in this parish?

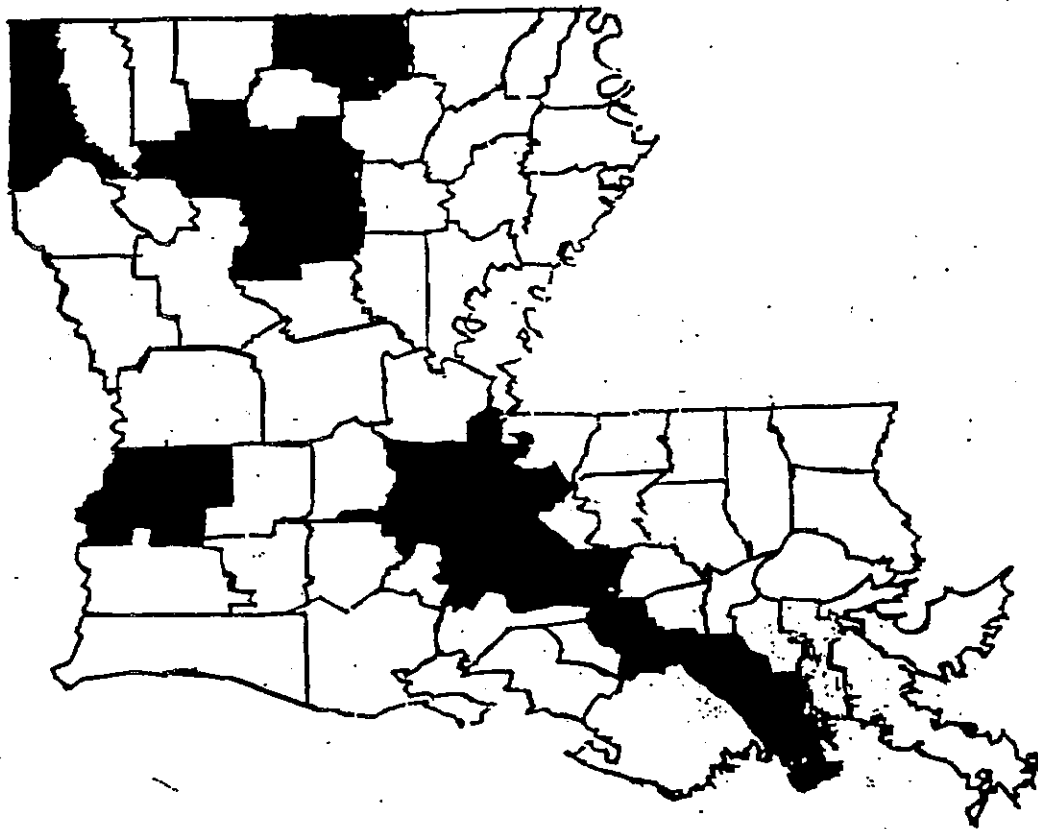
Of thirty-six respondents in parishes with MFW, 33% (twelve), reported machinery-related injuries to be a problem. The prominent agricultural industries where these injuries occurred were sugarcane, cotton, and forestry (see Figure 3).

As Figure 3 shows, agents from a number of parishes reported the prevalence of machinery-related injury. In the sugarcane, forestry and cotton industries, large machinery is widely used. Machinery-related injuries have been associated with loss of fingers, arms and

different parts of the lower body. More research is needed to better understand this finding.

FIGURE 3

PARISHES REPORTING MACHINERY-RELATED INJURIES



PARISHES REPORTING MACHINERY-RELATED INJURIES

Question 9: How much do you think MFW in your parish have had negative health consequences to pesticides?

In two parishes agricultural agents reported effects of pesticide use to be a problem for MFW. Those parishes are Tangipahoa and Livingston. These are the parishes reporting the highest numbers of MFW, and the crops harvested are food crops (cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes and strawberries).

Question 10: What is the main agricultural industry in you parish?

See Table 1.

Question 11: What are the labor intensive crops in your parish?

See Table 1.

Question 12: What seasons/times of year are MFW used in your parish?

See Table 1.

Question 13: What specific agricultural labor jobs do MFW perform in your parish?

Table 7 shows parish agents' reports by parish of the type of crop MFW work, the type of labor performed by MFW, and the time of year that labor is performed.

TABLE 7
Parish Agents Report by Parish

PARISH	TYPE OF CROP	TYPE OF LABOR	MOS. WHEN MFW LABOR PERFORMED
Ascension	sugarcane	plant, harvest and grind	Aug-Dec
Avoyelles	sugarcane	planting cane	Sept-Nov
Assumption	sugarcane	planting and grinding	Aug-Dec
Beauregard	forestry	sawmills	variable throughout year
Bienville	forestry	planting trees	Dec-Feb
Caddo	cotton	harvesting	Sept-Nov
Caldwell	cotton	harvesting	Aug-Dec
Claiborne	poultry	poultry plants	variable throughout year
Concordia	cotton	run cotton gins	Sept-Oct
E. Feliciana	ostrich	preparing animals for slaughter	variable throughout year
Franklin	cotton	run cotton gins	Sept-Dec
Iberville	sugarcane	harvesting	Aug-Oct
Jackson	forestry	planting trees	Jan-Mar
Lafayette	sugarcane	planting and harvesting	Sept-Nov
Lafourche	sugarcane	planting and grinding	Aug-Dec
Lincoln	peaches	harvesting	Aug-Sept
Livingston	strawberries, peppers, and cucumbers	picking	Feb-May
Morehouse	cotton	run cotton gins	Aug-Sept
Ouachita	cotton	harvesting	Aug-Dec
Point Coupee	sugarcane	planting and harvesting	Aug-Oct
Sabine	poultry	poultry plants	variable throughout year
St. Helena	poultry	poultry plants	variable throughout year
St. John	sugarcane	planting, harvesting and grinding	Aug-Dec
St. Landry	sugarcane	harvesting	Aug-Nov

PARISH	TYPE OF CROP	TYPE OF LABOR	MOS. WHEN MFW LABOR PERFORMED
St. Martin	crawfish	harvesting	Sept-Nov
St. Mary	sugarcane, soybeans	varies	MFW used in shortages throughout year
St. Tammany	emu	varies	variable throughout year
Tangipahoa	strawberries, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers	picking crops	strawberries & peppers: Feb-May tomato & cucumbers: June-Sept
Tensas	cotton	harvesting	Sept-Oct
Terrebonne	sugarcane	planting and harvesting	July-Sept
Union	forestry, swine & poultry production	harvesting pulp, sawmills, poultry & swine plants	variable throughout year
Vermillion	sugarcane, cattle	sugarcane; harvesting & planting cattle: varies	sugarcane: Sept-Nov cattle: variable
Webster	hayfarming, cotton & dairy	varies	MFW used in shortages throughout year
W. Baton Rouge	sugarcane	planting	Aug-Oct
Winn	forestry	sawmills	variable throughout year

DISCUSSION

A limitation of this type of estimation is there is no guarantee that the information gathered is accurate or complete, because it relies on sources with limited viewpoints and built-in biases. The information gathered is based on their informed opinions from their interactions with MFW and farmers. These opinions were shaped by first-hand experience. While this has drawbacks, it is essential in Louisiana given that data on MFW is extremely limited on a "by parish" basis.

Additionally, other factors must be considered that could have created biases about certain responses. These factors include:

- ◆ Legal Status of MFW: When asked about this, agricultural agents were reluctant to discuss this issue. The majority stated that the labor contractors handled matters of immigration status of MFW. For this reason, along with lack of availability of data, this issue was not pursued.
- ◆ Language, Racial Stereotypes, Culture: Only six agents mentioned any provisions for providing culturally appropriate agricultural health and safety interventions, literature and translators. The remaining thirty did not see this as an issue, yet ten agents noted a problem with lack of warning signs in appropriate language. This finding may suggest that there could have been issues with these three factors, coupled with language barriers and stereotypes.
- ◆ Lack of Input from MFW: There was no input from MFW themselves to offer insights regarding agricultural health and safety concerns of particular relevance to them.

Recommendations

The data gathered suggest the following areas for future work:

1. Linguistically and culturally sensitive health and safety material

This study suggests the importance of developing agricultural health literature that is culturally sensitive, with an emphasis on Spanish-speaking population of Mexican descent. Priority should be given to parishes that have 100 or more MFW in the parish, because of the larger numbers of MFW there this rationale would be most cost-effective and efficient. This was

identified by 97% of respondents as being the predominant ethnic group, with Spanish as the predominant language. Spanish-language materials have been developed in other states and should be reviewed for relevance in Louisiana (Note that Tangipahoa and Livingston parishes are receiving these types of services from the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in Hammond, Louisiana).

2. Increased health care and service provider interaction

Increase the communication and interaction between parish health units and health care and service providers who provide for the health and safety needs of MFW populations.

Personal communication involving health care providers, service providers and public health officials provided insight into this issue. Overwhelmingly, lack of communication among relevant professionals and a failure to share resources were cited as dominant problems. Parish health professionals should work in concert with AHEC professionals to solidly identify ways they can work together.

3. Future research on MFW estimation

Another way to enumerate this population would be through conducting a cross-sectional survey. This survey should be conducted in Tangipahoa Parish in the peak agricultural season, February through May. This particular area is suggested because of the high concentration of MFW in that parish. Cultural and linguistic sensitivity was found to be a problem for MFW in Tangipahoa parish. For this reason, interviewers should preferably be bilingual and culturally sensitive. Also, face-to-face personal surveys are suggested as the most effective survey methodology. This methodology is suggested to get a more accurate estimation of the number of dependents of MFW in the parish.

Public health students from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine could be involved in designing and conducting such a survey. This would serve to strengthen the link between Tulane, the public health units, AHEC, and the MFW community.

4. Health and safety issues

A more in-depth analysis of agricultural health and safety issues concerning MFW and their dependants could be a powerful tool in assessing the health status and issues of MFW. This may promote a greater awareness of the agricultural injuries sustained and any adverse effects of pesticide contamination. This could be part of the study mentioned in the prior section. The focus could be the agricultural and safety issues identified in tables 6A and 6B. These issues are: lack of translators; lack of warning and information literature in the appropriate language; limited accessibility to health care; heat and humidity in sawmill factories leading to injury; alcohol abuse; adapting to health and safety issues involving emus and other exotic birds; exposure to pesticides; incidence of diabetes among pregnant MFW wives; high rate of pregnancy; sexually transmitted diseases; low infant birthweight; ringworm and headlice among children; lack of immunizations and lack of utilization of public health facility by MFW and dependants.

5. Machinery-related injuries

Figure 3 indicates that in a significant number of parishes where MFW work machinery-related injuries are of concern. The kind of injuries noted are life-threatening and disabling. Parishes with large forestry, sugarcane and cotton ginning industry reported concentrations of this type of injury. This merits a health education campaign aimed at reducing the number of injuries by providing injury prevention strategies.

Further research can help to clarify the scope of machinery-related injuries. Such research could examine: reporting procedures for this type of injury, compensation, specific type and use of machinery, current safety procedures, and current medical emergency plans.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings suggest that a migrant farm worker population of significant proportions exists in Louisiana, and that this population experiences a number of health and safety problems which merit attention from public health and social service providers. Insights can be drawn from this data that may be useful in further studies. It is the hope of the authors that this data can prove useful in planning programs in agricultural health and safety issues in Louisiana. Much more work is needed in this area, as information pertaining to this population, and to the agricultural health and safety issues they face in Louisiana, is extremely limited.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Resource Guide:
LSU Cooperative Extension Services and Agricultural Agents

<p>Acadia Parish Office Agent: Barrett Courville Court Circle Crowley, La. (318) 788-8821 / (318) 374-8821</p>	<p>Allen Parish Office Agent: Frank Moguiot 4th St. Oberlin, La. (318) 639-4376</p>	<p>Ascension Parish Office Agent: Bill Davis 214 S. Burnside Gonzales, La. (504) 621-5799</p>
<p>Assumption Parish Office Agent: Rick Louque 4805 Hwy 1 Napoleonville, La. (504) 369-6386</p>	<p>Avoyelles Parish Office Agent: Carlos Smith 112 S. Lee St. Marksville, La. (318) 253-7526</p>	<p>Beauregard Parish Office Agent: S.T. Sils Courthouse Basement Deridder, La. (318) 463-7006</p>
<p>Bienville Parish Office Agent: Billy Nut 602 S. Maple St. Arcadia, La. (318) 263-7400</p>	<p>Bossier Parish Office Agent: Howard Dowdy Courthouse Benton, La. (318) 965-2326</p>	<p>Caddo Parish office Agent: John Lowe 2423 E. 70th St. Shreveport, La. 71101 (318) 226-6805</p>
<p>Caldwell Parish Office Agent: Gary Wilson 224 Pearl St. Columbia, La. (318) 649-2663</p>	<p>Cameron Parish Office Agent: Garry Wicky Parish 3140 Cameron, La. (318) 775-5516</p>	<p>Concordia Parish Office Agent: Glen Daniels 405 Carter St. Vidalia, La. (318) 336-5315</p>
<p>Desoto Parish Office Agent: Chuck Griffin 104 Crosby Mansfield, La. (318) 872-0533</p>	<p>East Baton Rouge Parish Office Agent: Jeanette Tucker 805 Louis St. Baton Rouge, La. (504) 389-3056</p>	<p>East Carroll Parish Office Agent: Don Weston 202-A Sparrow St. Lake Providence, La. (318) 559-1459</p>
<p>East Feliciana Parish Office Agent: James Deviller Bank St., Police Jury Bldg. Clinton, La. (504) 683-3101</p>	<p>Evangeline Parish Office Agent: Gerald Roberts 230 Court St. Ville Platte, La. (318) 363-5646</p>	<p>Franklin Parish Office Agent: Bill Russell Courthouse Winnsboro, La. (318) 435-7551</p>

<p>Acadia Parish Office Agent: Barrett Courville Court Circle Crowley, La. (318) 788-8821 / (318) 374-8821</p>	<p>Allen Parish Office Agent: Frank Moguiot 4th St. Oberlin, La. (318) 639-4376</p>	<p>Ascension Parish Office Agent: Bill Davis 214 S. Burnside Gonzales, La. (504) 621-5799</p>
<p>Grant Parish Office Agent: Rodney Houston 200 Main St. Colfax, La. (318) 627-3675</p>	<p>Iberia Parish Office Agent: Norris Grabert Courthouse New Iberia, La. (318) 369-4441</p>	<p>Iberville Parish Office Agent: Mark Tassin 23640 Peters St. Paquemine, La. (504) 687-5155</p>
<p>Jackson Parish Office Agent: Eddie White 500 E. Court Jonesboro, La. (318) 259-5690</p>	<p>Jefferson Parish Office Agent: Jerry Sisk 6640 Riverside Drive Suite Metairie, La. 70003 (504) 838-1170</p>	<p>Jefferson Davis Parish Office Agent: Eddie Eskew Courthouse Jennings, La. (318) 824-1773</p>
<p>Lafayette Parish Office Agent: Stan Dutil 1010 Lafayette St. Lafayette, La. (318) 267-7090</p>	<p>Lafourche Parish Office Agent: Mike Herbert 402 W. 5th St. Thibodeaux, La. (504) 446-1316</p>	<p>LaSalle Parish Office Agent: Jim Summers Courthouse Jena, La. (318) 992-2205</p>
<p>Lincoln Parish Office Agent: Ron Adams 201 Vienna Ruston, La. (318) 251-5134</p>	<p>Livingston Parish Office Agent: Kenny Sharpe Old Courthouse Bldg. Livingston, La. (504) 686-3020</p>	<p>Madison Parish Office Agent: Mike Rome 114 N. Cedar St. Tellulah, La. (318) 574-2465</p>
<p>Morehouse Parish Office Agent: Jerry Erwin 9609 Marlatt St. Bastrop, La. (318) 281-5741</p>	<p>Natchitoches Parish Office Agent: Charles Johnson 624 2nd St. Natchitoches, La. (318) 357-2224</p>	<p>Orleans Parish Office Agent: Dan Gill P.O. Box 24006 New Orleans, La. 70184 (504) 482-1107</p>

<p>Acadia Parish Office Agent: Barrett Courville Court Circle Crowley, La. (318) 788-8821 / (318) 374-8821</p>	<p>Allen Parish Office Agent: Frank Moguiot 4th St. Oberlin, La. (318) 639-4376</p>	<p>Ascension Parish Office Agent: Bill Davis 214 S. Burnside Gonzales, La. (504) 621-5799</p>
<p>Ouachita Parish Office Agent: Gary Wilson 704 Cypress St. Monroe, La. (318) 323-2251</p>	<p>Plaquemines Parish Office Agent: Allen Vaughn 7163 Hwy. 39 Suite 201 Braithwaite, La. 70040-9742 (504) 682-0081 ext. 2233</p>	<p>Pointe Coupee Parish Office Agent: Miles Brasier 180 E. Main New Roads, La. (504) 638-5533</p>
<p>Rapides Parish Office Agents: John Harris & Terry Washington 708 Washington St. Alexandria, La. (318) 473-6605</p>	<p>Red River Parish Office Agent: Johny LaVasseur 2015 Red Oak Rd. Coushatta, La. (318) 932-4342</p>	<p>Richland Parish Office Agent: Marian Ferris 402 Madeline St. Rayville, La. (318) 728-3216</p>
<p>Sabine Parish Office Agent: Paul Morrison 802 W. Maine St. Many, La. (318) 256-3406</p>	<p>St. Bernard Parish Office Agent: Scuddy LeBlanc Police Jury Government Complex 8201 West Judge Perez Chalmette, La. 70057 (504) 497-3261</p>	<p>St. Charles Parish Office Agent: Fenwick Swann P.O. Box 427 Hahnville, La. 70057 (504) 783-6231/6232</p>
<p>St. Helena Parish Office Agent: Ronny Brodwell Hwy. 10 Greensburg, La. (504) 222-4136</p>	<p>St. James Parish Office Agent: Desiree Dorez 5800 Hwy 44 Convent, La. (504) 562-2320</p>	<p>St. John Parish Office Agent: Larry Broch P.O. Box 250 Edgard, La. 70049 (504) 497-3261</p>
<p>St. Landry Parish Office Agent: Keith Norman 2070 Hwy 749 Opelousas, La. (318) 948-0561</p>	<p>St. Martin Parish Office Agent: Chris Robisheaux 114 Courthouse St. Breux Bridge, La. (318) 332-2181</p>	<p>St. Mary Parish Office Agent: Donal Fontinot Courthouse Franklin, La. (318) 828-4100</p>

<p>St. Tammany Parish Office Agent: J.B. Anders & Sandra Benjamin P.O. Box 390 Covington, La. 70434 (504) 892-2208</p>	<p>Tangipahoa Parish Office Agent: Annie Coco 305 E. Oak St. Amite City, La. (504) 748-9381</p>	<p>Tensas Parish Office Agent: Robert Goodson Courthouse Annex St. Joseph, La. (318) 766-3222</p>
<p>Union Parish Office Agent: Howard Grider 210 E. Water St. Farmerville, La. (318) 828-4100</p>	<p>Vermillion Parish Office Agent: Andrew Granger 1105 W. Port St. Abbeville, La. (318) 898-4335</p>	<p>Washington Parish Office Agent: Aubry Posey 1104-B Bene St. Franklinton, La. (504) 839-7855</p>
<p>Webster Parish Office Agent: Buddy Thomas 410 Main St. Minden, La. (318) 371-1371</p>	<p>West Baton Rouge Parish Office Agent: Harry Laws Courthouse Annex Port Allen, La. (504) 336-2416</p>	<p>West Carroll Parish Office Agent: Myrl Sistrunk Constitution Ave. at Marietta Oak Grove, La. (318) 428-3571</p>
<p>West Feliciana Parish Office Agent: Charles Wilson 351 Dogwood St. St. Francisville, La. (504) 635-3614</p>	<p>Winn Parish Office Agent: Karen Shirley Courthouse Winnfield, La. (318) 628-4528</p>	

APPENDIX B

Telephone Interview Questions

- Question 1: What is your estimate of the MFW population in your parish?
- Question 2: What is the race/ethnicity of the MFW population in your parish?
- Question 3: What language do the majority of these MFW speak?
- Question 4: Do you view lack of access to culturally and linguistically sensitive literature and services as a problem?
- Question 5: What is the sex and marital status of MFW in your parish?
- Question 6: Do children work in the fields?
- Question 7: What agricultural health and safety issues are you aware of?
- Question 8: Are machinery-related injuries a problem in this parish?
- Question 9: How much do you think MFW in your parish have had negative health consequences to pesticides?
- Question 10: What is the main agricultural industry of your parish?
- Question 11: What are the labor-intensive crops in your parish?
- Question 12: What seasons/times of year are MFW used in your parish?
- Question 13: What specific agricultural labor jobs do MFW perform in your parish?