IMMIGRATION AND AGRICULTURE

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Immigration and Agriculture

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3 Topics

- Immigrants in the US
- Immigration Reform
- AgJOBS
Daily Arrivals = 90,000

- 2,600 legal immigrants x 365 = 949,000
- 86,000 temporary visitors = 31 million
- 1,400 unauthorized = 511,000/year
Immigration 1

- 37 million foreign-born US residents
- Three almost equal groups:
  - legal immigrants and temporary visitors
  - naturalized US citizens
  - unauthorized
Immigration 2

- 8 of 12 million unauthorized in labor force, in ag, construction, meatpacking, services
- Ag: less than 20% of unauthorized, but often port of entry
- Ag: special role in immigration from Braceros, SAW
Immigration Reform

• Early 1980s: Mexican crisis, UFW problems, 25% unauthorized in CA ag and concentrated in less perishable
• IRCA (1986): Grand Bargain
• Employer sanctions to reduce unauthorized
• Amnesty to wipe the slate clean
IRCA’s Effects

- Unauthorized up: 3.5 million in 1986; 12 million in 2006
- Why: sanctions did not work; legalization worked too well, esp in ag
- IRCA helped to spread “Mexicans” throughout rural America
1990s: Unauthorized Up

- **Ag:** let’s have H-2A E-Z to get legal farm workers
- **Issues:**
  - Replace certification with attestation
  - Housing allowance, not housing
  - Reduce AEWR
AgJOBS 1: Legalization

• Purpose: Give ag a legal work force
• Legalization: Up to 1.5 million unauthorized get 6-year blue cards
• Must continue to do some farm work to earn immigrant status; can travel in and out of US; family members protected from removals
AgJOBS 2: Reform H-2A

- Attestation replaces certification
- AEWR frozen at 2002 levels and studied (from $9.20 in CA in 2007 to $8.02)
- Housing allowance of $1 to $2 an hour replaces the requirement to provide housing
Ag Labor Force Changes

• Difficult entry means longer stays, maybe quicker exits from ag
• More outsourcing of esp seasonal worker procurement to FLCs
• Higher hourly wages and earnings with more young men; few benefits
Farm Labor Outlook: no imm

- Wage costs up with minimum wage increase
- Health care: play or pay?
- New enforcement efforts: ICE and Swift; RICO
3 Predictions

- Farm workers of tomorrow grow up today outside US
- Middlemen play big role, esp in seasonal labor market
- Farm labor costs increase unevenly; need to plan for unanticipated changes
Further information

• http://migration.ucdavis.edu

Thank you