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# H-2A Trends in the Delta States Region from FY2008 to FY2021

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## Introduction

- The Delta states are large agricultural producers in the Southern U.S. with a large value of agricultural exports
  - Arkansas ranks 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Louisiana 29<sup>th</sup>, and
  - Mississippi 24<sup>th</sup>
- The H-2A program is picking up momentum in the Delta states, providing labor for various agricultural jobs where resident workers are not available.
- The H-2A program requires that workers must be paid at least the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) for their area and be provided housing and meal accommodations.
- Challenges arise as agricultural operators need to balance labor demand and labor costs.

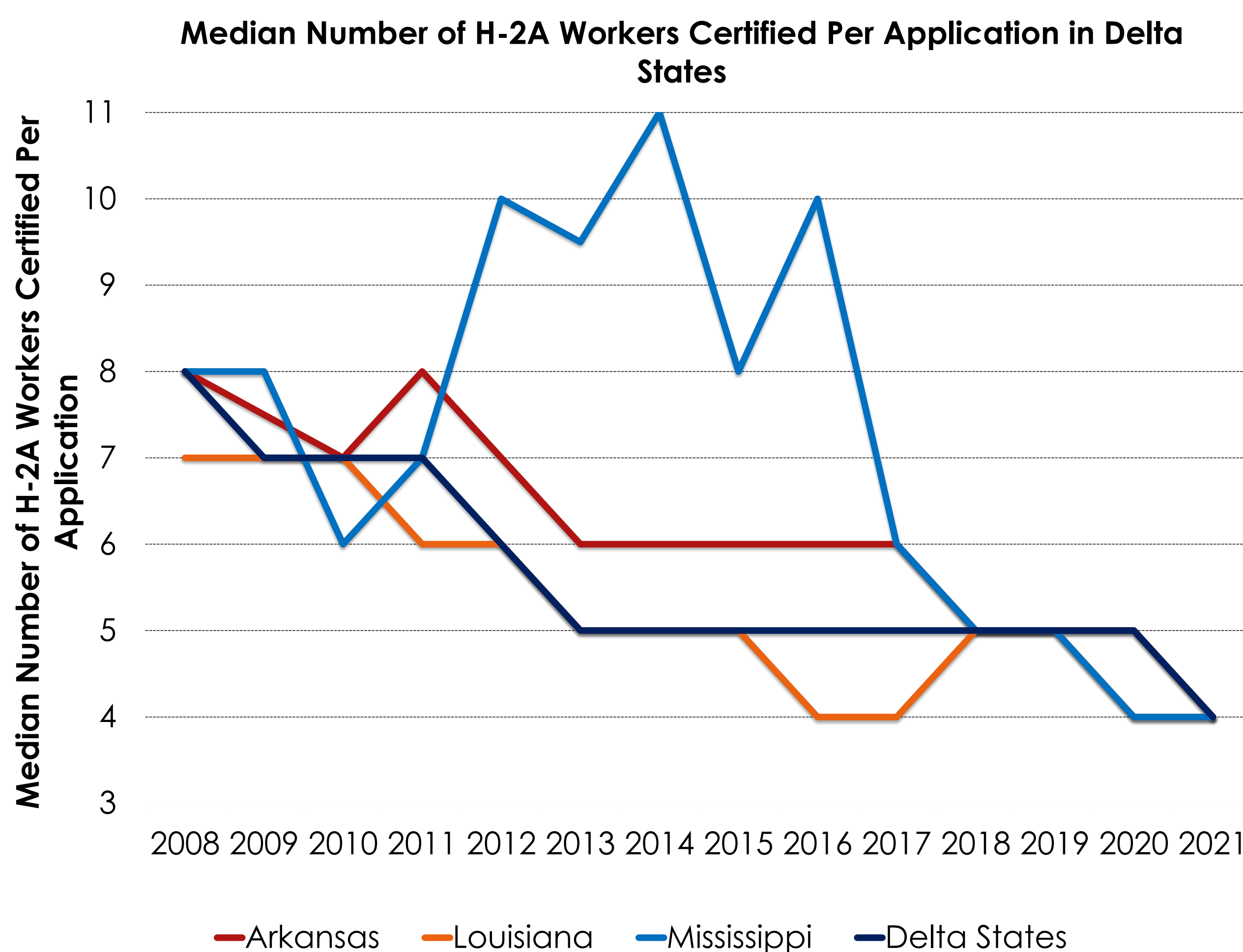
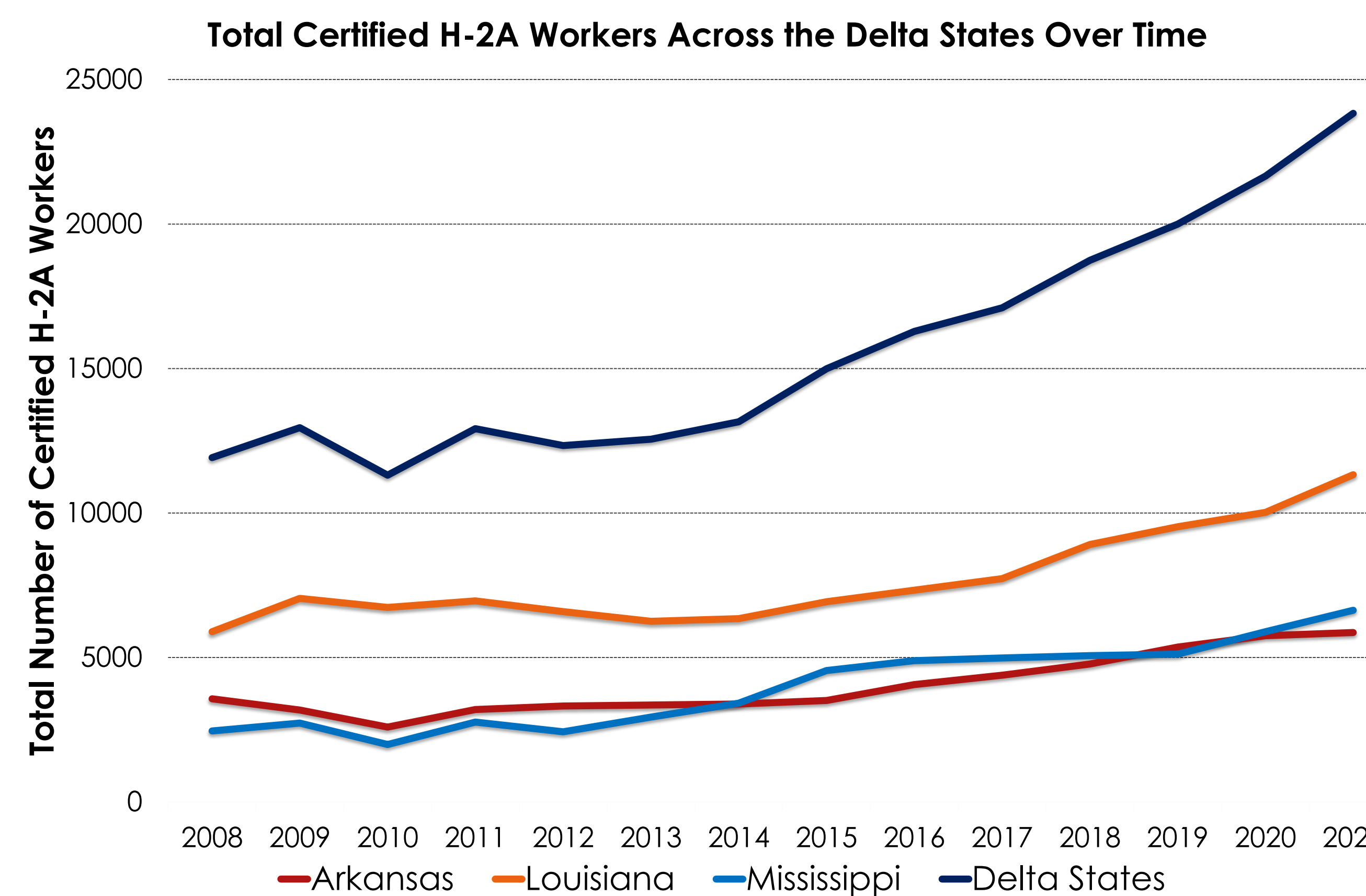
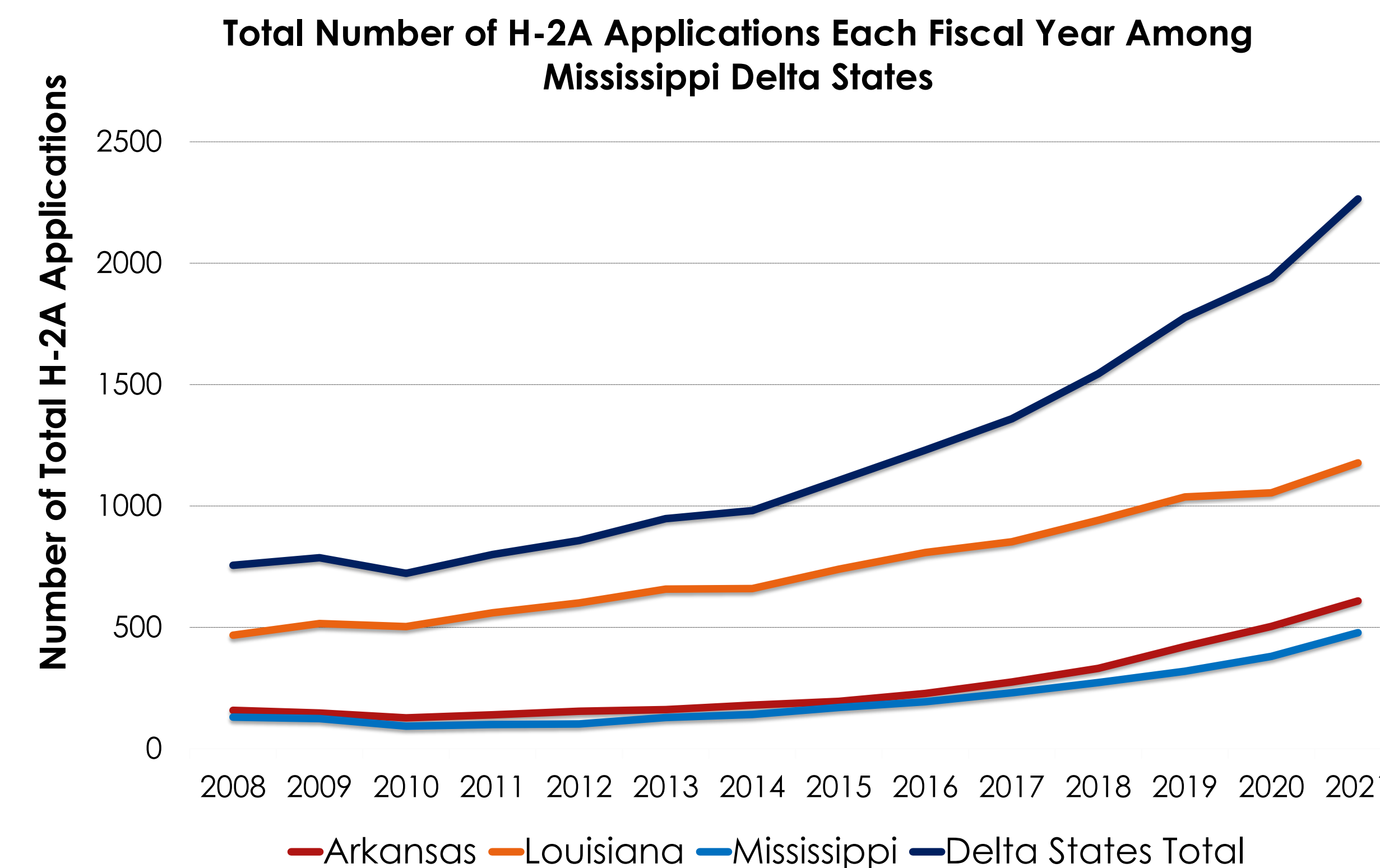
## Objectives

- Examine the use of the H-2A program in the Delta States region
- Document trends and patterns in the H-2A Program
- Identify potential policy implications

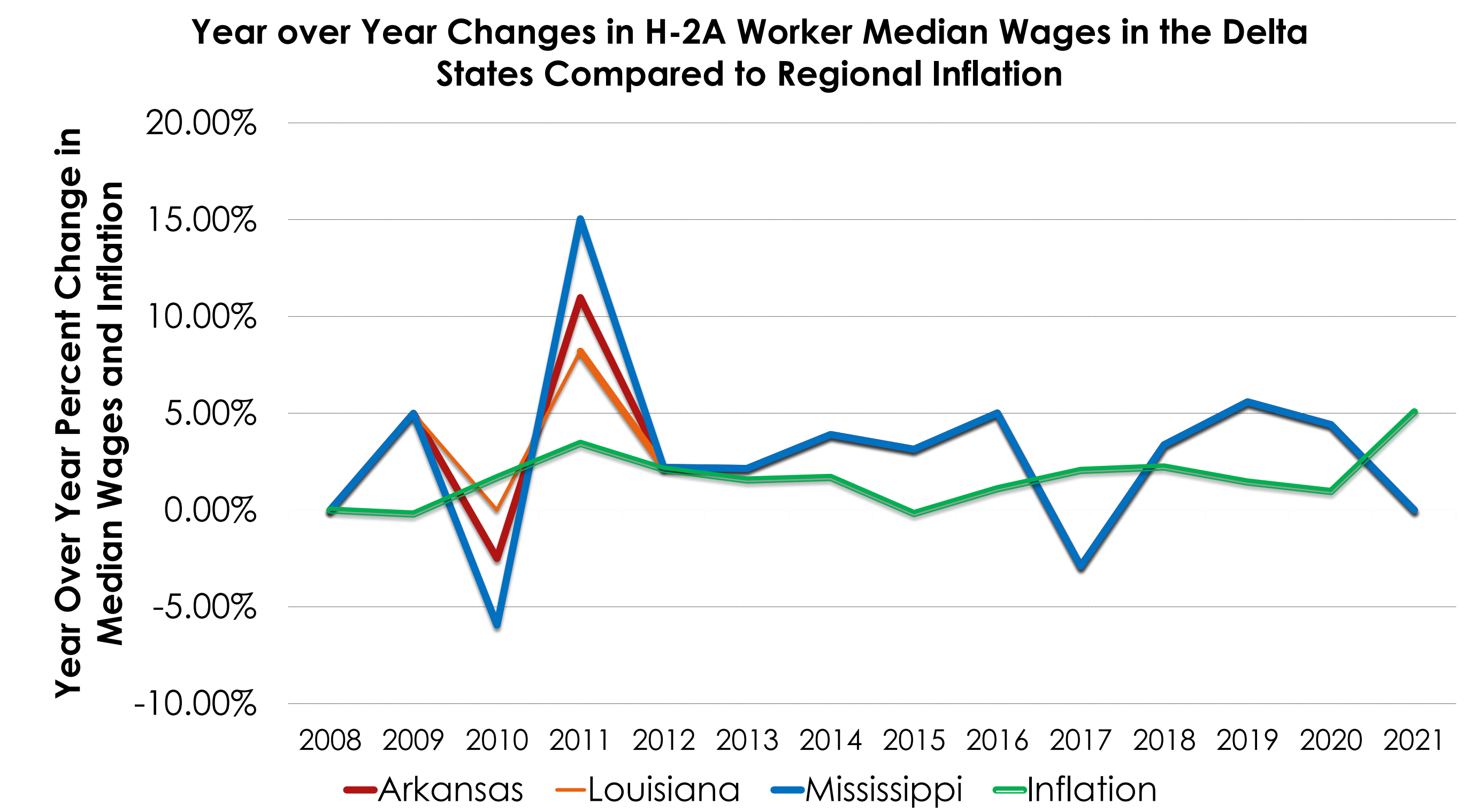
## Data Analysis

- Data on H-2A applications was collected from the U.S. Department of Labor USCIS.
- The data was analyzed using R, grouping the files into three distinct groups based on the data that was collected during the specific time-period to ensure consistent data-importation: from 2008-2014, 2015-2019, and 2020-2021.
- Applications were analyzed by state and year, and then grouped together to calculate statistics for the whole Delta States region.
- Inflation data was collected from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and is the average CPI for the year given of the inflation within the Southern region of the United States.

## Trends in Program Use



## Wages



- Median wages among ag-workers in the Delta states have slowly, but consistently increased from FY2008 to FY2021, from about \$8 per hour to slightly under \$12 an hour.
- Median and AEWR have considerably been higher than state and federal minimum wages, which has been \$7.25 per hour since 2009.
- Inflation in the Southern U.S. has increased at a rate less than the increase of median wages every year except three: 2010, 2017, and 2021.

## Observations & Policy Implications

- More agricultural operations in the Delta States are becoming reliant on H-2A workers as the pool of labor from resident workers has decreased.
- Delta State agricultural operations are likely facing higher costs for hiring workers, lowering the median number of workers hired per application.
  - Wages have faced occasional stagnation (2021) and decline (2010, 2017)
  - inflation has continuously risen, besides minute declines in 2009 and 2015.
- The number of H-2A laborers during the COVID-19 pandemic increased despite restrictions on immigration and temporary visas
- Wages during the pandemic remained stagnant, indicating a larger need for agricultural workers.