

**EXCLUSIVE**

Farmers Warn Trump of \$5 Billion Hit Without More Migrant Visas

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Summary by Bloomberg AI

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- A business coalition warned that a dwindling agricultural workforce threatens to further exacerbate the prices Americans pay for groceries.
- The coalition wants lawmakers to expand the H-2A visa program to provide agricultural employers with access to temporary labor, citing potential losses that could exceed \$5 billion.
- Lawmakers are deliberating proposals to change the H-2A program or grant undocumented farm workers legal status, including bills that would grant legal status to undocumented workers or expand the H-2A program to include access to year-round labor.

A dwindling agricultural workforce threatens to further exacerbate the prices Americans pay for groceries, a business coalition warned Wednesday as it lobbied lawmakers and President Donald Trump to intervene.

Farmers in the American Business Immigration Coalition — which represents more than 1,400 companies — said “the potential losses could exceed \$5 billion” if the domestic fresh produce sector doesn’t see expanded access to legal labor in a [letter](#) exclusively obtained by Bloomberg Government. Such losses translate to lower available inventory for consumers, upward pressure on prices, and slimmer margins for producers, the missive said.

The coalition wants lawmakers to expand the H-2A visa program that provides agricultural employers with access to temporary labor as the Trump administration's immigration enforcement efforts aggravate a preexisting farm labor shortage. Bureau of Labor Statistics [data show](#) the number of farm workers fell by 81,000 between January and August while deportations and related enforcement measures create "significant labor market effects in the agricultural sector," according to an Oct. 2 [Federal Register](#) notice from the Labor Department.

"If they're unsure of whether they wake up tomorrow and their crew of farm workers shows up, how can you possibly have a successful business?" James O'Neill, the coalition's government affairs director, said Monday.

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O'Neill said the bipartisan coalition sent the letter to coincide with hundreds of congressional office meetings this week to promote creating or expanding legal pathways for immigrant workers in sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare.

More than 40% of agriculture laborers [aren't legally authorized](#) to work in the US. Many using Reagan-era H-2A visas for legal employment have long urged Congress to streamline the program, make it less expensive, and establish year-round access for dairy farmers and others whose production isn't seasonal.

Employment Legislation

Lawmakers are deliberating numerous proposals to change the H-2A program or grant undocumented farm workers legal status.

Rep. [María Elvira Salazar](#) (R-Fla.) in July reintroduced a bill ([H.R. 4393](#)) with bipartisan support that would grant undocumented workers already in the US legal status if they paid a fine and met other criteria.

Rep. [Zoe Lofgren](#) (D-Calif.), on the other hand, is leading a bipartisan bill ([H.R. 3227](#)) that would expand the H-2A program to include access to year-round labor.

O'Neill said the coalition supports both bills and also anticipates H-2A legislation involving House Agriculture Chair [GT Thompson](#) (R-Pa.), which is based on [policy recommendations](#) lawmakers made in 2024 after forming a farm labor working group.

Matt Teagarden, CEO of the Kansas Livestock Association and one of the coalition members participating in the fly-in, said Trump can address some short-term concerns if legislative solutions don't come fast enough.

"We believe there's opportunities for the administration to do that — some version of an executive order," addressing the farm labor crisis, Teagarden said.

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