

CHILD LABOR OVERVIEW

HARVEST OF JUSTICE 2022: CHILD LABOR IN AGRICULTURE



Photo Credit: First Focus on Children

When most people think of child labor in the US, they picture text book images of young children working in factories in the early 1900s. They also assume child labor was stopped last century through labor laws. However, while the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) established minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards, it failed to protect both adult and child farm workers by excluding them from falling under the protections of these laws.

The FLSA allows children as young as 12 to work unlimited hours outside of school with parental permission. Children aged 10 and 11 can work on small farms for no more than eight weeks in the harvest season with parental permission. Moreover, proof of age is not required for a minor employee by the federal government. Due to such loose restrictions, there are children as young as five working in the fields.

Quick Facts:

- The federal minimum age to work full-time in agriculture is just 12 years old.
- 33 children are injured on farms every day, and a child dies in a farm related accident once every three days in the United States.
- 25 states do not have any limits on the amount of hours a child farm worker can work.
- 35 states allow children under 16 to work seven days a week in agriculture.
- 23 states do not have any restrictions on children working at night in agriculture.

Non-agricultural workers are not allowed to do hazardous jobs if they are under 18, but for farm work the age is lowered to 16. Moreover, workers younger than 20 years can be paid only \$4.25/hour during their first consecutive 90 calendar days of employment regardless of hours and types of work.

According to a recent survey from the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, 75% of child farm workers were under 15 years old. Justice for Migrant Women reports that there are between 300,000 and 500,000 child farm workers in the U.S., but the specific number is unknown. What we do know is that these children face many work hazards and lack many basic child labor protections.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think are some of the main causes of child labor?
- What role should the government have in ensuring the rights of children? How can these rights be enforced?
- How can you raise awareness about child labor in your community?

Prayer:

For the farm worker families who bear the exploitation of our country's agricultural system and their children who must work in the fields to help their parents survive, we pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Act!

Contact your congressional representatives and ask them to support the Children's Act for Responsible Employment and Farm Safety (CARE Act).

This bill provides basic child labor protections to U.S child farm workers — protections enjoyed by all other working children.

Learn more

Citations and links to additional resources at bit.ly/hoj2022

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National Farm Worker Ministry educates and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to support farm worker led campaigns to improve farm workers' working and living conditions.

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Child Labor in Agriculture: Overview