Michigan's EMERGENCY FARM LABOR

1943-1947



A Report on How Michigan's Wartime Labor Shortage Was Met

Prepared by
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Assisted by
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Emergency Farm Labor, 1943-47

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INTRODUCTION

During World War II our national leaders repeatedly said, "Food will win the war and write the peace." Food, however, could not be produced without sufficient farm help.

A nationwide shortage of farm workers that seriously threatened the entire war effort developed in 1943. More than a million skilled farm workers put on uniforms, and nearly 3 million more went to work in war industries. This represented more than 30 percent of the strongest and best agricultural workers in the nation.

To meet this crisis an Emergency Farm Labor Act was passed by the 78th Congress of the United States and became law on April 29, 1943. This act created within the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Extension Services of all agricultural colleges the machinery necessary "for assisting in providing an adequate supply of workers for the production and harvesting of agricultural commodities essential to the prosecution of the war."* An active farm labor program

^{*}Ouotation from Public Act 45 of the 78th Congress.



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was immediately established within the Extension Service of Michigan State College.

Although Michigan, because of the size and diversity of her agriculture, ranked as one of the "hot spots" of farm labor need, no appreciable loss of food occurred here because of lack of workers during the war emergency. Michigan State College has received many favorable comments from farmers on the operation of its Emergency Farm Labor Program.

On January 1, 1948, the Michigan State Employment Service, by act of Congress, assumed the responsibility of the farm labor program in Michigan.

Securing farm workers will probably continue to be an important problem in Michigan for some years to come. A look at the way farm labor needs were met during the war period may help in the future.

Here then is the story of Michigan's Emergency Farm Labor Program – the problems encountered, the methods employed to overcome them, and the results obtained.

Michigan Agriculture Requires Many Workers

Michigan is important in agriculture as well as in industry. She markets annually over 500 million dollars' worth of crops, livestock, and livestock products. Michigan farmers did a notable wartime job. They increased average annual food production at least 30 percent.

The work on some 150,000 farms producing small grains, live-stock, dairy and dairy products, poultry and eggs is usually done by the farm family. A small percentage of farmers use from one to three hired hands. Fruit and vegetable farmers require about 60,000 seasonal workers to help grow and harvest their crops.

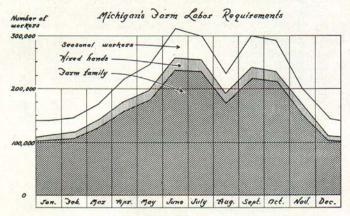
Michigan usually supplies one-half of these seasonal workers from her cities, towns, and villages. Migrant workers from other states

make up the rest of the seasonal farm labor force.

Nearly 12,000 Mexican workers come from Texas each year to work in Michigan sugar beets, cherries, snap beans, cucumbers, and tomatoes from May through November. Another 3,000 Texans work in the onion, celery, carrot, and mint fields.

From June to November about 15,000 migrant workers, mostly from the South Central States, help harvest Michigan's strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cherries, peaches, apples, and other fruit.

During the war period nearly two-thirds of the seasonal workers who formerly came to Michigan were lost to the farmers. Their replacement was one of the major Emergency Farm Labor jobs. The other big job was helping general farmers make wartime adjustments.





The executive staff plans the program. From left to right: R. J. Baldwin, Director of Extension; C. V. Ballard, Assistant Director of Extension; A. B. Love, State Supervisor of Emergency Farm Labor.

Creating an Effective Plan

The Emergency Farm Labor Program had to be broad in scope, flexible in action, and detailed in operation to supply successfully workers for farmers.

The plan consisted of three major phases: the recruitment of farm workers, their training for the job, and their placement on farms. Provision was made to take care of the problems of transportation, subsistence, housing, and medical care.

Volunteer farm workers were recruited by means of news releases, radio broadcasts, circular letters, posters, and the efforts of volunteer leaders. Men workers were enrolled in the U. S. Crop Corps. Youth workers joined the Victory Farm Volunteers and women became members of the Women's Land Army.

To assemble farmers' orders and get the workers and farmers together, placement centers were established at country stores, school houses, and county agent offices. Volunteer leaders were asked to help operate these centers.

City and farm leaders served on advisory committees that assisted in keeping the farm labor program sound and practical.

To keep the program coordinated with the rest of the war effort, public agencies — county, state, and national — were asked to help. War Ration Boards, War Boards, Selective Service Boards, Office of Civilian Defense, Office of Defense Transportation, and Departments of Health, Education, and Agriculture were all expected to help with problems of transportation, subsistence, housing, medical care, and training.

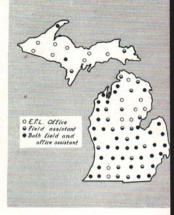
Experience demonstrated that the Emergency Farm Labor plan as developed was effective.

Building an Effective Organization

The Michigan Emergency Farm Labor Program operated with a small paid staff and a large number of volunteers.

From 95 to 110 paid field and office assistants, the number varying with the season, worked under the supervision of the 75 county agricultural agents of the state. A supervisor with 5 assistants and 2 clerks made up the state staff.

These few basic rules inspired loyalty and promoted efficiency:



Location of Emergency Farm Labor offices and personnel.

- The county agent was responsible for results within his county.
- The state staff kept the counties working together, supplied information, recorded results, furnished visual aids, news items, and instructions, and built up enthusiasm.
- Every paid employee made on-the-spot decisions based on knowledge of the program and on common sense.

The county staff enrolled many thousand volunteers. An effective Emergency Farm Labor Program would have been impossible without the help of public-spirited citizens acting on advisory committees; operating placement centers, labor camps, and training schools; supervising groups of workers; recruiting labor; working on Selective Service Boards; helping handle gasoline and food stamps; and doing the many other things that needed doing every day.

Many conferences were necessary. From left to right: H. P. Gaston, District Supervisor; Louis Hall, County Agricultural Agent; Ruth Borradaile, Farm Labor Assistant.



Farmers Helped Themselves

When the highly skilled farm hand who knew how to prepare the land, plant, cultivate and harvest the crops, feed and care for the livestock, and operate and maintain the different farm machines, went away to war or war work, there was no one to replace him.

Farmers, especially those on the livestock, dairy, and general farms, had to help themselves. They worked more hours each day. Many wives and daughters worked in the field for the first time. Neighbors exchanged work and equipment. Farm machinery was rebuilt to use less manpower.

Many one-man sprayers, manure loaders, buck rakes, grain elevators, and other labor-saving machines were devised and put to use. A new and greater machine age for Michigan agriculture came into being.

The Emergency Farm Labor Program helped spread information about these new labor-saving methods and machinery by means of exhibits at county fairs, meetings, news stories, word of mouth, demonstrations, and radio broadcasts.

Sixty-four county agricultural agents held 112 shows that featured the Rural Progress Caravan of the Michigan State College Extension Service during 1946 and 1947 as a part of their farm labor program. Over 150,000 persons saw the exhibits that demonstrated farm and home labor-saying methods and machines.

The College distributed over 161,000 descriptive folders at the shows and later filled nearly 154,000 requests for its bulletins.

Typical farm labor-savers.



The Rural Progress Caravan showing in Howell. Note the wall exhibits, the machines, and the interested farmers.





Working models of farmmade labor savers, mounted on a trailer, were demonstrated to the public at 16 county fairs during 1946 and 1947. Over 54,000 persons visited this exhibit.

"Let Wheels Do the Lugging" is a sample of the 14 different picture stories about labor-saving devices developed by individual farmers. Such stories were used by most of Michigan's 400 newspapers. This was another effective method used by Emergency Farm Labor to spread information about practical labor savers.



Farmers Helped Each Other

Many Michigan farmers grow crops that need lots of manpower for short periods of time. It takes people — not machines — to weed onions, celery, carrots, or block and harvest sugar beets, or harvest vegetables and fruit. In fact, it takes from 30,000 to 50,000 people working on different jobs for short periods of time from May to November.

These jobs had to be done during the war by groups of school youth, city women, business men, Jamaicans, Mexicans, or prisoners of war. They were usually sent in groups to the farming communities.

To use these workers effectively, farmers found it to their advantage to organize. They formed cooperative farm labor associations to help solve the problems of housing, transportation, subsistence, medical care, and training caused by getting these groups.

Farmers who contract to grow crops for processing companies had always depended on the companies to furnish the field labor to handle the crops. Acting as agents for their farmers, the processors of sugar beets, pickles, tomatoes, sweet corn, and snap beans organized the Michigan Field Crops, Inc., to make a short farm labor supply go farther.

Growers of small fruits, tree fruits, and muckland vegetable crops do not have processing companies to furnish their field labor. They found it to their advantage to form community farm labor associations to help one another with their mutual labor problems.

By uniting the various local associations, the fruit and vegetable growers created the Michigan Cooperative Farm Labor Services to give themselves mutual statewide assistance.

Truly, farmers helped each other. A new cooperative movement, the farm labor associations, was born.

One of many prisoner-of-war camps.





Location of associations that are members of Michigan Field Crops, Inc.

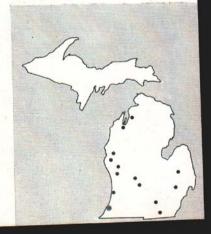
The members of Michigan Field Crops, Inc., consist of growers' employment committees of 42 different processors. This organization represents about 70 percent of the pickle companies of Michigan, 90 percent of the snap bean companies, 100 percent of the sugar beet companies, and 40 percent of the tomato companies operating within the state. This association services each year about 25,000 farmers growing these crops in 41 counties, with more than 10,000 seasonal farm workers that it recruited and placed.

The Michigan Cooperative Farm Labor Services consists of 14 local farm labor associations with a membership of about 8,000 farmers growing fruits and muckland vegetables. These represent about 60 percent of the heavy users of farm labor in these crops. They employ approximately 12,000 workers.

For their members, these associations operated prisoner-of-war

and foreign labor camps, secured housing equipment, organized transportation for workers, determined the prevailing wages, ran placement and reception centers, and helped move workers from one crop to the next.

Close cooperation between these two state-wide farm labor associations provided the method for an interchange of workers and a more effective use of the farm labor supply. Location of associations that are members of Michigan Cooperative Farm Labor Services.



The Emergency Farm Labor Program

What Michigan's 176,000 farmers planted, cultivated, and harvested during the war years depended largely on the solution to their farm labor problems.

Where the workers would come from; when and how they would arrive; how long they would stay; where they would be housed; and how much they would cost, were questions that had to be answered.

Seven interlocking fields of action made the Emergency Farm Labor Program of value to farmers. They were:

- Determination of Need for Workers. A reasonably accurate knowledge of where, when, and how many workers would be needed at any one time for any crop was determined by collecting and analyzing the farmers' work orders, their intentions to plant, and the current crop and weather conditions.
- Recruitment of Workers. Definite campaigns in townships, villages, and cities, using publicity and volunteer workers as organized and operated by county farm labor assistants found the needed workers.
- Placement of Workers. By establishing work camps and placement centers in local communities, the farm labor assistants were able to bring workers to where the farmers could readily get them.
- Training and Supervision of Workers. By pamphlets, meetings, and demonstrations county agricultural agents and labor assistants brought to farmers and workers a better knowledge of the value of training and supervision in getting the job done easier, faster, and better.
- Housing, Transportation, and Medical Care of Workers. Furnishing housing equipment and rail, bus, and local transportation for workers met most problems. Aid in securing priorities for building and travel needs was the greatest single service labor assistants were able to give. County health physicians and nurses were of inestimable value in caring for the medical needs of the workers.
- Labor-Saving Methods. Campaigns on labor-saving methods of farming helped many general farmers and considerably reduced the farm labor force needed.
- Employer-Employee Relations. Showing the farmers how to get along with their unskilled workers and how to keep the workers was a difficult service offered by the farm labor assistants.

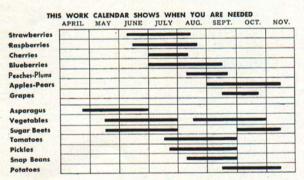
Determination of Need

Each year it was necessary to know how many farm workers would be needed in what areas of Michigan and for how long a time. Knowledge of these facts made it possible to secure a sufficient supply of workers and place them on the job as required.

Close estimates of the total farm labor supply needed in different areas of the state any one year were obtained by a study of the crop acreages, the amount of time necessary to do each farm operation, and the time of the year the jobs needed to be done.

Current information as to the acres planted, their growing conditions, and the effect of weather on the farming operations was gained from studies of the crop reports of the Michigan Crop Reporting Service, the daily weather reports, and frequent telephone conversations with the county agricultural agents, farm labor assistants, and farmers.

The supply of workers needed to meet the farmers' needs for the immediate future was determined in the counties by the labor assistants from their daily receipt of farmers' work orders and their ability to fill them. This information was sent daily to the state office and assembled there. It gave the total state needs for workers and determined the next important statewide farm labor action to be taken.



A typical way of showing work periods.

Workers Were Recruited

During World War II Michigan's 400 newspapers devoted more than 100,000 column-inches of space to Emergency Farm Labor's story of grower needs for agricultural workers. Every radio station in Michigan carried spot announcements regarding farm labor needs during critical periods. Without the help of press and radio, it would have been impossible to recruit the farm workers required.

Farm labor folks distributed leaflets and posters, sent out circular



letters, used the telephone, rang doorbells, and in many other ways told the story of the farmer's plight.

School teachers of the state enrolled the youth in the Victory Farm Volunteers. Luncheon clubs, the American Legion, women's organizations, and church groups recruited members for the Women's Land Army and the U. S. Crop Corps. Literally thousands of individuals rendered valuable assistance in the recruitment program.

Recruitment, which at first looked like the hardest job of all, actually became the easiest one.

Victory Farm Volunteers Worked Everywhere

The greatest single farm labor force available to farmers during the war emergency was the city and country youth who enrolled in the Victory Farm Volunteers.

It took a lot of work to recruit, train, and house these boys and girls. They were particularly welladapted to weed crops, harvest small fruits and vegetables, and do farm chores.

The farm labor folks carried on an active program to see that health was protected, accidents prevented, work supervised, and training for the job supplied while the youth were being transported, living in camps, or working in the fields.

Many farmers learned that fair treatment, good supervision, and short periods of on-the-job training do much to increase the efficiency of a worker.

Parents, farmers, and school people all agree that the Victory Farm Volunteer program improved the health of many a city youth, gave them a broader outlook on life, and got a lot of farm work done.



Victory Farm Volunteers, like the boy pictured above, will help many farmers grow and harvest their war food goals this year. This folder presents suggestions as its how farmers can get best results from youth labor and typical ways in which Victory Farm Volunteers can help Michigan farmers.

> Propored by DORIS CILLISPIS VIV Emergency form Labor Supervisor

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Michigan Elare College and U. S. Department of Agriculture respecting. F. J. Sandwin, Downey, Entennium Service, Printed



Record of Michigan Victory Farm Volunteer Placements

Year	Day	Workers living on	Campers	Total	Farmers	Camps	Training classes	
rear	workers	farms	Campers	workers	served	Camps	Number classes	Students
1943 1944 1945	84,095 42,465 30,725	253 718 557	347 443 20	84,695 43,626 31,302	8,401 4,246 3,072	7 6 1	40 27 49	3,932 681 700
1946 1947	16,483 9,798	331 527	20 85	16,899 10,325	1,648 1,312	<u>i</u>	12	233 165
Totals	183,566	2,386	895	186,847	18,679	15	133	5,711

School youth entering orchard and picking snap beans,







The W.L.A. uniform in use.

Women's Land Army Helped in Emergencies

The Women's Land Army might well be called the keystone in the arch of workers built by the Emergency Farm Labor Program for Michigan farmers. Farm women worked in the field, helped train raw farm recruits, acted as field supervisors, ran errands, encouraged the farmer to try new things, and bolstered his morale when things went wrong.

City women from homes, shops, factories, stores, and business places gladly helped in emergencies. When the going got tough for the farmers because of lack of labor, Women Land Army labor camps were established. The wom-

en harvested snap beans, cherries, and other fruit and vegetable crops.

When someone was needed to do house-to-house canvassing, sign up workers, or act as leaders and field supervisors of Victory Farm Volunteers, women volunteered.

American men do not like to have their women folks do heavy work. The war did demonstrate, however, that women are willing and can do many farm jobs well.

Record of the Women's Land Army

Year	W.L.A. workers	W.L.A. Camps					
		Number camps	Workers	Days operated	Farmers served	Workers'	
1943 1944 1945 1946 1947	12,679 14,197 8,607 11,919 10,325	3 5 1	145 470 367	82 141 28	39 47 43	\$ 4,324.15 11,925.43 833.65	
Total	57,727	9	982	251	129	\$17,083.2	

On the way to work.

In the field.





Other Volunteers Gave |Valuable Aid



Business men canning cherries at Hart, Michigan.

Civic organizations played an important part in the operation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Luncheon clubs organized business holidays in towns and cities so that their members and employees could help farmers make hay and harvest crops and help canning factories operate extra shifts to process perishable crops. Business men contributed advertising space in newspapers to help recruiting campaigns.

The public schools helped in recruiting, placing, and training city youth for farming. Agricultural vocational teachers held training classes for farm volunteers.

In many towns the Office of Civilian Defense volunteers rang doorbells and telephoned potential farm workers about the immediate need for workers. War Rationing Boards made extra gasoline, tire, and food stamps available for farm workers.

County War Boards helped the Selective Service Boards with the deferment requests of farm boys. Over 43,000 applicants for farm deferment were approved. The farm labor assistants helped the County War Boards by examining the farming operations of the applicants.

In all of these programs the county agricultural agent and the farm labor assistants acted as advisers and organizers.

College students harvesting sugar beets.



Migrant Movements Were Aided

There are two great streams of migrant workers that flow into Michigan each year. One of them originates in Texas, the other in the South Central States. In all, something like 30,000 out-of-state workers come here to work from May to November.

The Michigan Field Crops, Inc., conducts in Texas each year an active recruitment campaign for workers of Mexican descent to work in the sugar beet, cucumber, snap bean, and tomato crops. It provides transportation to Michigan and housing, medical care, as well as jobs for these workers.

No formal recruitment of workers by the Michigan Cooperative Farm Labor Services is carried on in the South Central States. Through the press and radio, information is supplied about work opportunities in the fruit and vegetable crops.

By close cooperation between the Emergency Farm Labor staffs of other states and those in Michigan, farmers in this state received their share of the short supply of migrant workers during the war years. vegetable growers of Michigan are today leaders in improving working conditions for the migrant.

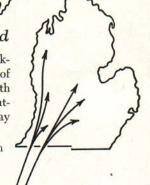
Working together through farm labor associations, improvements in housing, work practices, medical and economic environment are being made all over the state. Transportation and welfare of

proved by the establishment of reception centers.

are being im-

workers





The postwar

farm migrant has

a new conception

of working condi-

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er-employee relations. The fruit and

Foreign Workers Were Secured

Foreign workers were the most interesting, spectacular, and complex part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Farmers liked the foreign labor program, because it delivered to them a definite number of workers under a specific contract for a known period of time.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, U. S. Department of State, U. S. Army, U. S. Employment Service, and the War Relocation Authority all cooperated to make the foreign labor program of Emergency Farm Labor function in Michigan.

Through their farm labor association the farmers built and operated 38 labor camps, provided transportation to and from work, kept pay roll records, helped with food problems, and protected the health of workers. In the prisoner-of-war camps, the Army supplied the equipment, operated the camp, and supervised the workers, for which the farmers reimbursed the Army.

Individual farmers supplied housing and subsistence for the foreign workers living on their farms.

Foreign Workers in Michigan

Туре	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Prisoners of war. Jamaicans and Bahamians Mexican Nationals. Japanese	650 100 185	4,557 1,768 2,213 375	6,331 1,090 3,681	1,639 2,707	382 1,662
Total workers	935	8,913	11,102	4,346	2,044
Farmers served	2,805	15,864	18,912	11,618	5,423

Typical Mexican.

German prisoners of war.



Workers Were Placed Where Needed

The hub of the entire Emergency Farm Labor Program in Michigan was the placement of workers with farmers. Every other activity was designed to make this program more effective.

County agricultural agents and their labor assistants built and operated systems capable of quickly serving any farmer within their respective counties. They gave personal service to their farmers, even though it often meant long hours of work. They frequently helped load workers at placement centers and work camps early in the morning and helped unload them there late at night.

Day and night they held meetings, wrote letters, visited farmers, wrote news stories, broadcast on the radio, and held conferences with other agencies in the process of supplying farmers' needs for workers. Farmers were aided in getting priorities for machinery, housing equipment, gasoline, tires, food, and travel.

They examined the farm operations of applicants for agricultural deferment from selective service. Training schools were operated for workers, information was given on better ways of supervising farm workers, and better housing for workers was promoted.

They helped farmers with the problems of pay rolls, transportation, subsistence, housing, and medical care of foreign workers, as a part of the placement program.

The State Emergency Farm Labor staff transported workers from cities to county placement centers and work camps, and prepared and distributed pamphlets, posters, and news items about the needs for workers, methods of training, and supervision of farm workers. They also secured housing equipment, and ran statewide errands for county agricultural agents and labor assistants, in order to help make the placement of workers more effective.

The tables on the next page record the results of the placement program for Michigan.

Sign directs farm workers to a placement office.



Placement Offices and Personnel, Farmers Served, Placements Made

Placement offices	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
- Emergency Farm Labor	126 518 789	128 433 452	65 384 139	64 211 238	64 178 185
Volunteer leaders	3,053	2,553	2,018	1,104	1,030
Orders placed Placements* made	28,692 125,100	41,458	55,544 325,078	59,702 181,030	76,215

^{*}A placement is defined as one worker placed on one job.

Farm Labor Force in Michigan

Water from Water	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Workers from Michigan Victory Farm Volunteers Women's Land Army	24,183 12,095	20,167	19,856 8,556	16,483 11,919	10,325
Other volunteers	1,625	1,322	2,840	7,756	13,173
Texas South Central States Japanese-Americans	3,556 4,650 185	5,782 6,237 259	7,657 8,795	9,312 9,250	13,563 15,765
Conscientious objectors	60	64	62	77	
Prisoners of war. Jamaicans and Bahamians. Mexican Nationals.	1,600 1,588	4,557 1,842 2,150	5,531 2,152 2,348	1,707 2,652	328
Total labor force	50,192	56,131	57,797	59,156	61,97

Classification of Placements

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Seasonal placements Men. Women. Children.	25,837 12,679 83,687	124,086 26,015 67,041	200,806 35,459 84,525	111,712 24,956 41,557	96,007 16,001 32,003
Year-round placements Men. Women Children	2,897	2,120 446 718	3,680 51 557	2,469 5 331	3,205 4 105
Total placements	125,100	220,426	325,078	181,030	147,325

Period of Employment

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
1 to 3 days	30,122 68,325 23,756 2,897	68,325 130,215 16,771 5,115	128,944 174,036 17,067 5,031	96,621 77,019 4,685 2,705	74,088 64,250 5,782 3,205
Total placements	125,100	220,426	325,078	181,030	147,325

Interviewing workers.

Farmers pick up help.



TELL HIM -



2 SHOW HIM —



3 TRY HIM OUT —



PUT HIM ON HIS OWN

Training and Supervision Were Supplied

During the war period most farm workers were unskilled and untrained. Many farmers knew how they wanted their farm work done, but could not tell their workers how to do it.

Methods of training and supervision of farm workers immediately became of extreme importance. The Emergency Farm Labor Program met these demands, in part, by holding field demonstrations and by preparing and distributing pamphlets about the subjects.

One experiment of giving a week's training, combined with good supervision, to 3,000 prisoners of war increased their work output by some 30 percent.

Individual training of workers by farmers gave the best results when the following basic principles of teaching were used: Tell the worker—Show him how—Try him out—Put him on his own. The secret of this system depends on the farmer's thinking each job through and explaining the details step by step.

In almost every crew of agricultural workers are a few outstanding hands, who, without working either harder or longer, do two to three times as much work as the average employee.

Emergency Farm Labor studied the methods used by these better workers and prepared a series of booklets showing easier, faster, and better ways to do 13 different farm jobs. Over 200,000 copies of these "How to Pick" booklets were distributed to farmers and workers in Michigan.

These booklets_ helped train workers.



MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE

HOW TO PICK PICKLES Easier-Faster-Better



MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM



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EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM

HOW TO PICK STRAWBERRIES



MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE

HOW TO PICK SNAP BEANS Easier, Faster and Better



thy H. P. GASTON

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE

HOW TO PICK CHERRIES

EASIER, FASTER AND BETTER



Prepared by H. P. GASTON

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HOW TO PICK

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE

HOW TO PICK RASPBERRIES



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HOW TO PICK PEACHES

Easier-Faster-Better



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HOW TO THIN PEACHES Easier - Faster - Better



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EXTENSION SERVICE EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM EAST LANSING

HOW TO PICK APPLES Easier, Faster and Better



MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM

Transportation and Housing Were Important

Every time workers were transported, the farm labor program came up against wartime travel restrictions.

• County agricultural agents helped farmers overcome gasoline, tire, and oil restrictions through cooperation with local War Ration Boards. The Office of Defense Transportation cooperated with both the Labor Branch and the Extension Service to make possible group movement of foreign workers, migrants, and Michigan volunteers.

All housing used for foreign workers had to pass inspection by the farm labor personnel to meet the health and sanitation requirements of the Michigan Department of Health. Farmers found it hard to buy housing equipment. By using its working appropriations as a revolving fund and exercising its priority rights the Emergency Farm Labor Program made available on a loan basis \$203,000 worth of equipment, which was later sold to the farmers at cost.

The Equipment Program Served 7,826 Farmers

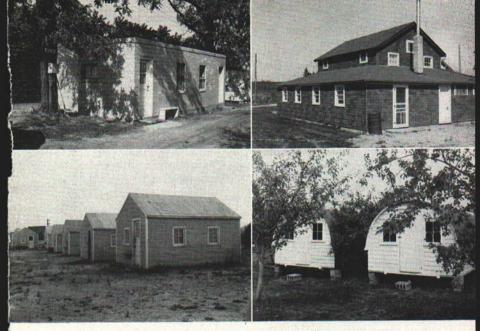
Items	1944	1945	1946	Cost per item	Total invest- ment
Tents. Cots. Mattresses Mattress covers Comforters. Kitchen ware.	9,587 11,047	500 4,100 4,100 4,900 7,600 19,576	2,150 4,250 3,375 6,189 16,790	\$27.00 1.60 2.85 .90 1.92 .09	\$ 96,345 16,192 12,729 9,980 65,236 2,756
Farmers served	1,381	2,039	2,406	7972	
Investment	\$46,128	\$47,496	\$109,614		\$203,238

Leaving for a work camp.

From work camp to field.







Homes for seasonal farm help provided by Michigan farmers.

Fixing up houses for workers taught many farmers that comfortable housing is one of the best ways of attracting and keeping

good help.

The farmers' interest in better housing for farm help grew so rapidly that the Emergency Farm Labor staff prepared news items, a series of lantern slides, and a booklet entitled, "Homes for Seasonal Farm Help," to show farmers how some successful growers solved their farm help housing problems.



Employer-Employee Relations Were Improved

Although the Emergency Farm Labor Program was established for the purpose of "assisting in providing an adequate supply of workers for the production and harvesting of agricultural commodities essential to the prosecution of the war," the greatest single gain that came to the farmers of Michigan was the realization that good employer-employee relations are absolutely essential to success.

For the first time Michigan agriculture realized that farm workers are fully as important as good cultural practices and effective harvesting methods. From 20 to 30 percent of most farmers' gross income is paid out in the form of wages to farm help. Many growers now realize that good employer-employee relations pay big dividends in the business of farming. They often pay even better than good practices in soil conservation, crop cultivation, weed eradication, and disease and insect control.

Some of the outstanding fields of employer-employee relations in which good practices pay off are:

 On-the-job training and supervision of farm workers by the growers themselves or by competent foremen.

> Payment of the best wages prevailing in the community for similar work.

> Providing adequate, well-located housing, preferably supplied with electricity, rúnning water, cooking and washing conveniences.

> • Protecting the health of workers by providing good drinking water, safe garbage disposal, adequate latrines, and compensation insurance.

 Preventing social discrimination in religious, educational, and recreational activities by the communities in which the workers reside.

Many workers return to the same farm year after year and stay through the entire season. In such cases workers and farmers alike say of each other: "They treat us fairly. We are friends."



YOU GET

Prepared by N. P. Guston

EMERGENCY FARM LABOR PROGRAM

EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE

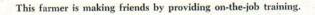
Communities can do much to encourage farm workers to come every year. Reception centers, child care centers, medical centers are appearing in ever-increasing numbers. They attract workers to the areas where these facilities are available.

Restaurants that refuse to serve migrant workers, and churches and schools that receive them coolly make it difficult for the growers in the surrounding territory to get and keep farm workers. Neither farming nor business is likely to prosper in such communities.

Many growers are beginning to realize that the farm workers of today have a broader outlook on life than ever before. Many of the workers have traveled extensively and are quite well informed. They like farm work, but they realize that they are entitled to a square deal and many of them insist that they get it.

Employer-employee relations is the key to a force of skilled, satisfied workers sufficiently large to meet the needs of tomorrow's agriculture.

A state-wide migrant committee, appointed by the governor, which combines the interests of Michigan in the welfare of migrant workers, is now functioning. Membership consists of employer groups; representatives of Michigan departments of Education, Health, Welfare, Safety and Agriculture; and educational institutions like Michigan State College. Their efforts can improve the opportunities for better employer-employee relations.





Shifting to a Peacetime Program

On December 31, 1947, the Emergency Farm Labor Program, established by Congress on April 29, 1943, and operated by the Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural colleges, officially came to an end, and national farm labor problems were returned to the U. S. Department of Labor by congressional action.

The Department of Labor, by this action, was instructed to proceed under the terms of the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933. This Act gave to the various state employment agencies, working in cooperation with the U. S. Employment Service, the responsibility of assisting in securing farm workers for agriculture.

The Michigan State Employment Service, operating under the authority of the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission and in close cooperation with the U. S. Employment Service, is now providing Michigan farmers with a statewide farm placement service.

The Extension Service of Michigan State College continues to offer educational programs of assistance to the farm labor problems of Michigan through the various departments of the College and its county extension service.

The farm labor problems of the future can, to some extent, be fore-seen and classified. The conflict between manpower and machinery will become more intense. More people will go into industrial work. There will be fewer farmers, and they will operate larger tracts of land. Farm workers will need to have more technical skill and mechanical knowledge. If the mechanization of agriculture increases more rapidly than industry can absorb farm workers, there may be temporary surpluses of farm workers in some sections of the United States.

Organized labor, in its efforts to improve the working conditions of the laboring man, can be expected to move into the field of agricultural labor. Workman's compensation, unemployment compensation, and old age benefits for agricultural workers are just around the corner.

No longer can agriculture reasonably expect farm workers to appear at its doorstep asking for work. Only by organized cooperation of farmers and a definite national farm labor program that recognizes the peculiarities of farm work can the agriculture of the future be assured of an adequate farm labor supply.

A new day in farm labor is rapidly approaching. It will bring many problems. The most important factor in the farming of the future is probably the farmers' ability to get along with their help. Employer-employee relations must continue to improve.

Fifty thousand seasonal workers are needed annually on Michigan farms. All public and private agencies interested in agriculture must work together if the farmers' need for workers is to be met.

Summary and Conclusions

It can be truly said that the Emergency Farm Labor Program of the Extension Service, Michigan State College, successfully gave the assistance "in providing an adequate supply of workers for the production and harvesting of agricultural commodities essential to the prosecution of the war" demanded by congressional action in 1943. No appreciable quantity of food was lost in Michigan during the war period due to a lack of farm workers.

In action the program demonstrated these facts:

- An annual statewide determination of the need for agricultural workers gives the information that makes possible the development of procedures that will secure the necessary farm labor supply.
- Well-organized mass recruitment and placement of workers is more economical than having farmers individually search for their farm labor.
- Better health, sanitation, and housing practices, when promoted in an organized way and used by farmers individually, tend to make farm laborers want to work in Michigan.
- An organized information service about farm jobs, when made available to farm workers, makes jobs easier to find, reduces the worktime lost, and increases the annual earnings.
- Cooperative farm labor associations of farmers furnish the practical machinery needed to effectively work together on farm labor problems.

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A WORD OF APPRECIATION

A major war-time responsibility was given the Extension Service by the Congress under the terms of the Federal Emergency Farm Labor Act. That assignment is now completed. The record of achievement is one of which all associated with the program may well be proud. The cooperation and efforts of farm groups, processors and the staff are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

R. J. BALDWIN

Director of Extension Service

