



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

## Employment Department

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April 17, 2001



Dear Stakeholder,

Please find attached for your review the proposed Agricultural Services Plan for Program Year 2001 (July 1, 2001 to June 30 @002). This draft is the result of information and suggestions received from interested stakeholders, partner agencies and Field Office managers and staff who have direct contact with farmworkers and agricultural employers.

Our agency is mandated by Federal regulations to deliver qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportional employment services to farm workers. We provide a full range of job placement and employment services to both farm workers and agricultural employers. Our outreach obligation is to locate migrant and seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) who are not being reached by the normal intake activities of our Field Offices and acquaint them with the services we offer. Outreach also involves registering and referring farm workers to employment or other supportive services when they cannot come to the office for assistance.

If you choose to respond to this request, please do so in writing, no later than the close of business on Friday, May 18, 2001. You may mail a letter to the address shown above; FAX a letter to 503-947-1668; or e-mail your comments to either Sharon Rood, Agricultural Representative ([Sharon.K.Rood@state.or.us](mailto:Sharon.K.Rood@state.or.us)) or Mary Lewis, Monitor Advocate ([Mary.L.Lewis@state.or.us](mailto:Mary.L.Lewis@state.or.us)).

We look forward to hearing from you. If you would like to review a copy of the Agricultural Services Plan for PY 00, or would like additional information, please contact either Sharon Rood at (503) 947-1659 or Mary Lewis at (503) 947-1220.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Loftus  
ES Program Manager, Workforce Programs

SL:SR  
E-4



DRAFT for Public Comment

**Agricultural Services Plan  
for Employment Services to  
Farm Workers and Agricultural Employers**

**Program Year 2001  
July 1, 2001-June 30, 2002**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Agricultural Plan for Program Year 2001, as outlined in this document, is mandated by Federal regulations (20 CFR 653.107 (a)) and establishes the Oregon Employment Department's strategy for providing a full range of job placement and employment services to both farm workers (including migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs)) and agricultural employers. The Program Year begins July 1, 2001 and ends June 30, 2002.

Agriculture has a major impact on the culture and economy of Oregon. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), more than 220 different commodities can be found throughout the state. Virtually all counties are involved in some agricultural activity and one in every 12 Oregonians works in agricultural-related work. Agricultural production, processing and services contribute more than \$5 billion in direct economic output per year. Jobs that contribute to this output range from farm employment, food processing, marketing, warehousing, regulatory oversight, and other agricultural related activity and services.

The Oregon Employment Department estimates that agricultural employment activity during 2000 averaged 59,975 workers, with a peak season high of 86,757 workers. These figures refer to on-farm employment such as production and harvest and not to related activities such as marketing or processing.

This Plan outlines specific steps for the delivery of employment service to MSFWs, farm workers in general and agricultural employers. Federal regulations (20 CFR 653.100) require that the agency deliver services "for migrant and seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) on a basis which is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs."

Our outreach obligation is to locate MSFWs who are not being reached by the normal intake activities of our field offices and to tell them about the employment services we offer, encouraging them to use these services. Outreach also involves registering and referring MSFWs to employment when they cannot come to the office for assistance, and referring them to a range of workforce and service agencies and community-based organizations.

The components of this plan are the result of input solicited from the public and interested stakeholders in letters mailed on February 9, 2001, and from our own field staff who work directly with agricultural employers and farm workers. Commitments made in the Agricultural Services Plan for the Program Year 2000 which are not completed by the end of the current program year will be carried over into Program Year 2001.

## **ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

### **Summary of Calendar Year 2000 Agricultural Activity and Farmworker Employment**

Bright spots in Oregon agricultural activity, in 2000, included the state's growing nursery and green house industry, and the improvement in the cattle market. Better prices and the

growing export market are some of the reasons for the upswing in the cattle industry. Tree fruit producing counties benefited from a good year for sweet cherries and pears. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2000 was an improvement economically over figures for calendar year 1999.

During calendar year 2000 the labor supply varied by crop and point of time during the season. However, overall, the labor supply was adequate. A few exceptions were peak season harvesters for potato and onions in Marrow County, and cherries, peaches and pears in Hood River and the Rogue Valley. Skilled orchard pruners were needed in Jackson County from February through April and the nursery industry expressed a labor shortage for skilled nursery workers and crew leaders as evidenced by H2A labor applications. Attached as Appendix 1 is a chart of the state showing the crops and activity dates of the significant labor intensive agricultural activity. Appendix 2 sets out the agency's final estimate of calendar year 2000 agricultural employment by county and month.

### **Future Projections for Agricultural Activity and Farmworker Employment**

In PY 2001, significant uncertainty exists in the mid-Willamette Valley within the agricultural community of farmers and farmworkers. The closure of AgriFrozen Foods facilities in the area, a leading food processor, will not only idle approximately 1000 food processing and food processing related workers but impacts the 150 growers under contract to plant and produce fruits and vegetables for the company.. At this writing there is a likelihood that there will be significantly less crop production as a result of the loss of a major commodities market. Vegetable and berry growers expect to be hit the hardest from this closure.

Both within and outside of the Willamette Valley, the escalation of energy prices is another outside influence that will directly affect Oregon's agricultural economy. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing a 230% increase in power rates that will definitely cause many farmers to consider the cost of farming versus profit margin. "Energy costs force production cutbacks" was a quote from an article about the cut flower industry that was featured in the Capital Press (the NW Agriculture Weekly newspaper) on February 16, 2001.

The absence of water resources throughout the state is another major factor affecting agriculture for PY 2001. Oregon's drought and the energy crisis go hand in hand. If drought conditions continue, farmers will be forced to cut back on irrigation. The BPA is considering paying farmers not to irrigate in order to conserve water for energy production.

Additionally, the Oregon Cherry Growers announced the decision to limit brine cherry deliveries to 40 percent of the five-year average. This decision leaves up to 60 percent of such varieties as the Royal Anne to rot in the orchard. The Cherry Growers Association is gambling that this move to decrease the surplus of stored maraschino cherries will improve the price for brine cherries.

The abundance of AgriFrozen workers seeking employment (many of whom either do work in the fields part time or have worked in the fields), the likely reduction in planted acreage due to the AgriFrozen closure, the potential for farmers selling irrigation rights in lieu of planting, the potential cutback in water for irrigation, and the reduction in cherry harvests portend hard times for agricultural workers. More workers and less planted and harvested crops generally result not only in less work per worker but lower prices for the available work. This suggests a burgeoning need for social and supportive services for farmworkers unable to find alternate employment in non-ag related industries. It may also work to eliminate the reported labor shortages experienced at peak harvest time. See Appendix 3 for the agency's occupational projections for 2008 based on 1998 employment. All agricultural occupations except farm equipment operator are projected to have double-digit growth.

## **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

### **Staffing for Farmworker Outreach and Services**

All Employment Department offices will conduct outreach to the seasonal farm worker and the migrant farmworker populations in their service areas to see that large numbers of farm workers learn about our employment services. Offices designated as MSFW Significant Offices by the federal Department of Labor will conduct especially vigorous outreach as appropriate for their communities during the peak agricultural season. Based on PY 99 figures, Madras and Milton-Freewater will be mandatory designated MSFW Significant Offices for Program Year 2001-2002; at this writing the Department of Labor has not asked for nor identified other offices which will be designated as MSFW Significant Offices based on special circumstances

The amount of staff time and the specific outreach activities undertaken in each service area will vary based on local factors. These include the number of farmworkers in the service area and the number of registered labor camps, the degree to which other farm worker services are available for coordination of outreach, the level of knowledge about the services of the agency within the farmworker community, and the presence of Spanish language media.

Central administrative office personnel also address delivery of services to farmworkers and agricultural employers. In addition to the Monitor Advocate and her duties, these include staff who oversee the clearance order/H2a programs, support agricultural employer relations programs in field offices, establish independent relationships with agricultural employer interests, and oversee Spanish translation for improving access to Employment Services (ES) by limited English proficient job seekers (including farmworkers). Labor market information and research staff also support work with farmworkers and agricultural employers. They publish the bilingual English/Spanish *Farm Labor Information Bulletin*, respond to agricultural employment data requests and conduct prevailing wage and practices surveys. They also produce other labor market materials relevant to farmworkers and their future employment, most of which are posted on the agency's OLMIS website and a number of which are also available and posted in Spanish.

### **Proposed Farmworker Outreach Activities**

The basic focus of outreach is to advise MSFWs about our employment services and facilitate their use of them. Outreach activity will include informing farm workers about employment opportunities, Employment Department resources such as our complaint system, and encouraging workers to register for services.

Our staff will continue to provide information about community resources and will be vigilant to detect any existing labor abuses. Referrals will be made as needed for food, clothing, housing, transportation, medical, social and legal needs. As appropriate, staff will encourage farm workers to use the resources available for English-as-a-second language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes.

Outreach activities will be recorded in logs and kept for review. Staff from the administrative office may accompany field office staff on farm worker outreach and will conduct their own outreach to farm workers, farm worker organizations, agricultural employers and employer associations. Details of individual offices' outreach activities can be found in the plans for each workforce region, and include the following:

- **Using Spanish-language media (print, TV and radio) to reach larger audiences.** Where available, each office will contact local Spanish and English language media (radio, print, and television) and arrange appropriate activities to market Employment Department services and educate the farmworker community about our services. Activities may include regular radio “job shows” and appearances on community forum/community issues programs on radio and television. Additionally, the Administrative office will explore developing an English and Spanish video to explain our employment services. This video could be used in outreach presentations, in TV appearances and in our offices.
- **Participating in multi-agency/organization roundtables.** Roundtables provide an effective means of updating partner staff about resources and programs and keeping ourselves current with changes in partner programs and resources. This forum is a significant community resource. In addition to our staff participation, offices will encourage other organizations serving farmworkers to participate. Where such roundtables addressing workforce and outreach do not exist, the Monitor Advocate will explore the interest among partners in conjunction with field office management for initiating meetings for farmworker outreach information and coordination. Where partners indicate an interest in initiating a roundtable, the Monitor Advocate will sponsor an organizing meeting.
- **Presenting talks about agency services to groups of farm workers served by other organizations and to staff of organizations which serve farmworkers.** Staff will offer to speak directly at partners' staff meetings, helping to assure that those persons know about the agency's services and obligation to assist farmworker customers. Each MSFW Significant Office will seek to make presentations about our services at migrant head start centers in their service area and seek to make presentations at the schools that have migrant education parents meetings and ESL

classes. Presenters will emphasize training programs available to increase workplace skills.

- **Participating in community events and activities to reach the farmworker community.** The Employment Department, in cooperation with the Department of Consumer and Business Services and the Mexican Consulate in Oregon will participate in the "Carrousel of Information". The purpose of the Carrousel is to provide a forum for governmental agencies and service related organizations to disseminate information to Mexican nationals and their families. The Employment Department will provide information booths or other means for staff participation in "back-to-school" fairs, farmworker appreciation days, job fairs and similar activities. We will also publicize these events within the MSFW community.
- **Conducting traditional one-on-one outreach to farmworkers.** One-on-one outreach is an important part of recruiting workers for agricultural job openings when our bank of enrolled job seekers does not meet demand. This aspect of outreach will focus on reaching migrant farmworkers, including those living in labor camps or those likely to be without access to Spanish media.
- **Making access to our services available in Spanish through our website and our network of touchscreen kiosks.** During Program Year 2000 the agency significantly improved the nature and amount of Spanish-language features on its web page, including posting of the first edition in Spanish of its Careers tabloid. Work continues to improve the Spanish information available on the agency Kiosks. Additional refinements and features to both the website and kiosks in Spanish are expected for Program Year 2001, along with increased attention to educating our partners on the availability of these features to enhance their work with farm workers.

#### **Resources Available through Other Organizations**

Staff throughout the agency will work with other organizations to address the employment-related needs of the agricultural workforce with care given to avoid duplication of services. Our MSFW outreach staff is available to share knowledge and expertise with our workforce partners to create training opportunities, and promote programs available to farm workers. Cooperative arrangements with other organizations for conducting one-on-one outreach to farmworkers will increase our ability to reach large numbers of farmworkers about agency services. Organizations such as The High School Equivalency Program, Oregon Child Development Coalition and Migrant Education programs around the state open their meetings to agency staff. Our cooperative efforts with partners have enhanced and will continue to enhance the education, career and life styles of farm workers.

#### **Goals for Farmworker Outreach**

Staff will increase efforts to use English and Spanish language media, public meetings, and community-based organizations to reach farm workers. Our staff will educate farm workers about employment opportunities, services, and training opportunities, and will work with our partners and community organizations to create a better service network.



Staff will provide focused outreach services for dislocated workers to find new job opportunities and refer workers to organizations that offer skills training.

Staff will develop an additional outreach plan to recruit workers for any H2a job orders and clearance orders that are approved for Oregon. Outreach activities will be made available to all workers on job sites that hire H2a approved workers.

## **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR FARMWORKERS**

### **The Workforce System and Farmworkers**

In Oregon, partner locations known as 'affiliate sites', in addition to One-Stop Centers, are to have expanded knowledge about the agency's employment services programs so that they can make 'value-added' referrals. Those of our own offices that are not themselves One-Stop Centers, are affiliate sites in the workforce system. The one-stop workforce system as envisioned is designed to greatly enhance access to our services, including increasing potential access by farmworkers.

Self-service computers in offices provide customers direct access to the agency's enhanced, bilingual Spanish-English web pages. Recognizing that the English and Spanish literacy skills of farmworkers is on average lower than the general population, agency staff will continue to be sensitive to the limits of self-service. All staff will be expected to identify those farmworker customers who cannot self-access listed jobs and resources (be that in English or in Spanish) and to offer them more personal means for receiving the equivalent quality of service received by non-farmworker customers and for completing registrations with us. If group instruction for learning to access our job listings via computer is likely to be ineffective, individual one-on-one sessions will be offered when possible.

Collaboration with our workforce partners includes developing and promoting classes offered in Spanish to Hispanic workers. Such classes range from pesticide spraying to basic computer classes.

The addition of a Spanish option to the agency's labor market information program, (OLMIS) offers options for Spanish speaking farmworkers to receive enhanced vocational guidance and career change information. During Program Year 2001, the agency will continue the work to facilitate access to this resource by farmworkers.

Program Year 2001 will see continued work on the development of skill sets for agricultural employment. This refinement and detail in worker skills and employer requests should facilitate the matching of Oregon farmworkers with available Oregon agricultural employment, including H2a job orders filed in or accepted by Oregon.

During Program Year 2001, the Monitor Advocate will visit Employment Department offices and affiliated One-Stop Centers to assess key MSFW service delivery standards, to meet, where necessary, with partners and community organizations serving farmworkers and to assess the impact of each region's One-Stop system on farmworkers' access to services. Effective systems and best practices will be identified and shared

within the region and with other regions. Recommendations for improving access will be identified in conjunction with local farmworker service providers and provided to the region's workforce leadership as appropriate. Additionally, opportunities for training One-Stop partners on the agency's responsibilities to farmworkers will be examined. Statewide or regional training programs will be developed as appear beneficial to improved service delivery. In conjunction with these aforementioned visits, all MSFW Significant offices and offices with significant labor intensive agriculture in their service area will be reviewed in accordance with federal review guidelines. Following all such reviews, the Monitor Advocate will prepare a brief written report on the visit, which will be communicated to the relevant field office manager and to the Assistant Director for Field Operations.

As in prior years, the agency will look for any trend indicating the early arrival of migrant workers prior to the beginning of seasonal work and seasonal housing availability. If such a trend appears, the agency will work with employment security and farmworker organizations in other states to publicize the situation in Oregon and attempt to stem a social services emergency. Offices will be alert to any large numbers of early arrivals and, as in past years, work to find temporary employment to help meet the food and shelter costs of workers before harvest season begins. We will also work closely with social service partners to see that farmworkers know about available resources.

#### **Federal Equity Indicators and Placement Goals**

Agency performance in delivering employment services to farmworkers suggests that, on a statewide level, the agency will continue to meet or exceed equity in all measured categories at the close of Program Year 2000. Additionally, at this writing the agency is also placing farmworker customers at a higher rate than non-farmworker customers in all four measured categories, including long-term, permanent employment. As workloads permit, Staff will work closely with the Monitor Advocate to identify the most efficient ways of collecting information on and monitoring service to farmworkers and agricultural employers. The Monitor Advocate and the administrative office will work with individual field offices to identify the scope of such programs and determine how to use them to improve job development for farmworkers.

In Program Year 2001, the agency plans to meet or exceed equity in at least five of six employment service categories and at least three of four placement services categories on a statewide basis. We also expect all MSFW significant field offices to meet or exceed equity in at least five of six employment services categories and at least three of four placement services categories. On a quarterly basis, the Monitor Advocate will meet with Department executive staff to provide a progress report on the Agricultural Services Plan including agency performance on the equity indicators and placement goals.

Finally, the degree to which farmworker customers are successful under Oregon's own workforce performance measures will be examined relative to that of non-farmworker customers. Where differential performance is found, the particular service delivery system of a region will be examined by the Monitor Advocate to determine the causes of

the differential performance. Recommendations for change and improvement will be offered and reviewed.

## **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS**

The Employment Department is committed to giving businesses a greater return on their investment by providing more direct services to address their priority needs. The public labor exchange services of the Department are available to all employers, agricultural and non-agricultural.

### **Services Provided to Agricultural Employers**

Agency staff will use every opportunity to educate agricultural employers about agency programs and offer labor market information and labor recruitment services to employers. These services include local recruitment of workers, intra and interstate recruitment for recruiting workers outside an employer's labor market and the H2A program for seeking foreign workers if adequate numbers of US domestic workers are not available for employment at the employer's time of need. Information will be made available about agricultural employment laws and regulations. Workforce analysts, employer relations staff, and marketing plans all focus on employer outreach, recruitment and placement services. During the Program Year emphasis will be given toward marketing our services to the agricultural employer community. Priority will be given to involving more agricultural employers in the Oregon Employer Council (OEC).

- **Greater program awareness through public service announcements.** The Employment Department promotes our services through public service announcements. Agricultural employers will be targeted in this effort in various parts of the state to promote the use of our services. This could be a marketing tool to promote Oregon agriculture awareness as well as the Employment Department.
- **Seeking new ways to meet the needs of agricultural employers.** The Department recognizes the need to locate and provide workers to agricultural employers when a demand for labor exists. Administrative staff is exploring the possibility of creating an Agriculture addition to our web site with links to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and other sites of interest to agricultural employers. A survey will be taken of agricultural employers for the purpose of planning service delivery needs.

The Department will continue to provide technical assistance and accurate information to any agricultural employer wishing to file an application for labor certification under the H2a program. We will continue to work to make this program as efficient and effective as possible under current Federal regulations, with the understanding that the first priority of the Employment Department is to assist the employer with locating and hiring U.S. workers qualified to perform the job.

Staff will promote the Oregon Department of Agriculture's *Oregon Farmers' Handbook*, and the Bureau of Labor and Industries poster of various employment-related laws. Administrative office staff will coordinate appropriate activities with the Oregon State

Extension Service, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and other agricultural organizations. They will also respond to requests for assistance from field office staff.

The Farm Labor Information Bulletin (English and Spanish versions) will continue to be issued (weekly during peak activity; semi-monthly approaching and following harvest season; monthly as field preparation starts) and posted on the agency's web-page (<http://www.olmis.org>). During the Program Year 2001, the Department will explore methods to improve the content and dissemination of the Bulletin.

### **Estimated Agricultural Job Order and Labor Recruitment Performance**

It is difficult to predict the degree to which agricultural labor exchange services offered by the Employment Department will be used in Program Year 2001. Agricultural employers will be encouraged to list all job openings with their nearest field office. Through this collaboration with agricultural employers, the Department will be able to develop reliable data concerning the number of agricultural job openings, the number of workers who express an interest in agricultural employment, the number of workers referred, and the results of our efforts to fill these positions. Employers will also be encouraged to provide accurate feedback as to the results of referrals made, enabling us to measure our success and to target areas requiring improvement.

We will continue to offer enhanced services to agricultural employers. The Employment Department will offer to hand out and collect applications, schedule interviews, and provide space at a specific field office for the employer's interviews. In so doing, our staff is able to assist the worker with the completion of the employer's application, help with translation when needed, and track whether or not workers actually apply. This process provides better follow-up by applicants, thus more reliable recruitment results.

Enhanced staff training opportunities will continue during the Program Year 2001. Training will focus on improved methods for recruitment, screening, placement, and outreach efforts benefiting both farmworkers and agricultural employers. Farmworker organizations, agricultural regulatory and licensing agencies, and agricultural employers will be invited to participate in our annual staff training and share in the process of educating our staff.

### **CONCLUSION**

The global economy and environmental forces are increasingly impacting agriculture in Oregon. Agricultural employers and farmworkers are discovering the need to transition and adapt in order to survive in the present economy. An open dialog between agricultural employers, laborers, the Employment Department, and the workforce community is needed to find solutions for employers and workers alike. The Employment department is committed to working with agricultural employers and workers to better understand and address their changing needs and assist workers to transition from unskilled to skilled labor positions in agriculture as well as non-agricultural related jobs.

Working with farmworkers and agricultural employers is an important part of the agency's commitment to Oregon Job seekers and Oregon employers. We invite discussion to help us identify methods by which we can increase farmworker and agricultural employer satisfaction with the services offered and delivered by the Employment Department.