



Media Release

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H-2A Immigration Reform a Step in the Right Direction

Proposed changes to a federal temporary-worker program could help San Luis Obispo County farmers, but together, SLO Co. agriculturalists and California Farm Bureau says the proposal would be only a partial solution to meet labor needs on farms and ranches.

Late last week, the Bush administration announced a series of proposed changes to the existing H-2A program, which allows people from other countries to enter the United States temporarily to work on farms. Very few County and State farmers use the program, in part because it lacks the flexibility to serve the needs of fast-moving fruit and vegetable harvests.

“We welcome any reforms that will help family farmers hire people who are legally able to work in the United States,” California Farm Bureau Federation President Doug Mosebar said.

Local farm labor contractor, Carlos Castañeda, has seen labor availability stressed from immigration enforcement actions in SLO County over the last year. “Protecting our nation’s borders is absolutely important. We must find a solution to provide security while offering our country’s farmers a viable labor force.”

At the peak of harvest, California farms employ as many as 450,000 people, of whom only about 5,000 enter the country through the H-2A program. Mosebar said family farmers and ranchers will continue to press for fundamental changes in federal immigration laws.

Although, encouraged by the administration’s actions, Castañeda feels that the H-2A revisions are only a step in the right direction and is strongly advocating for comprehensive AgJOBS legislation.

AgJOBS has won support from farmers, labor unions and politicians of both parties. An effective temporary-worker program will contribute to a secure border and a safe, stable, domestic food supply for the United States.

“The AgJOBS legislation is by far the best proposal our legislators have developed. It addresses our famers’ sustainability and national security. This bill is a win-win for the industry and those that we depend on to harvest our crops,” said Castañeda.

For more information on the H-2A proposed revisions visit www.slofarmbureau.org. The San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of 2,100 members countywide.

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Mission Statement:

“To lead San Luis Obispo County in the protection, promotion and advocacy of agriculture for the benefit of our members and community”