

FARM WORKING CHILDREN & EDUCATION

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Farm workers are a vital group of laborers in the American economy, serving as the backbone for a \$28 billion crop picking industry¹. Farm work generally involves the agricultural production of crops—a process which includes planting, harvesting, and cultivating crops². Although farm workers play an important role in fueling the agricultural sector of the economy, they remain among the poorest groups in the nation³. The need to work and contribute to their family income forces many students into a working lifestyle and subsequently away from school⁴. Although a majority of youth from farm working families begins working in the fields in early adolescence, children as young as four or five years of age begin working with their parents due to financial hardship⁵.

Farm working students are among the most educationally disenfranchised groups of students in the U.S. Throughout the past three decades, researchers have documented a variety of factors that have hindered the academic outcomes of farm working students including language and social development, migration status, long work hours, and poor health/living conditions⁶. This demographic of students is more likely to enroll in school at an older age and attend fewer years of elementary school compared to their peers, thus leaving farm working students severely underprepared for subsequent coursework⁷. An estimated half of all children/adolescents who perform farm work on a regular basis do not graduate from high school⁸.



Half of farm working students do not graduate from high school.

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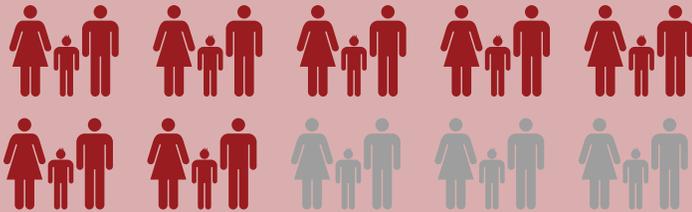


Child Laborers Working in the Fields



estimated 500,000 to 800,000

7/10 of farm working families earn less than \$20,000 annually.



12

The age a child can begin legally working in the fields according to federal law.



Percentage of migrant farm working students who enroll in school a month after the new school year begins.

Farm working students drop out of school at

4x

the national rate.