

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1011

March 7, 2024

Administrator Hubert Hamer
National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Administrator Hamer:

Thank you for your leadership of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), which conducts vital work to gather and report data concerning U.S. agriculture. NASS's mission is to provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture; your agency provides information about topics including food production and supply, prices paid and received by farmers, and farm labor and wages. Confidence in the efficacy and transparency of this work is important to Georgia's agricultural community.

Agriculture is Georgia's number-one industry, and one of my top priorities is ensuring that Georgia's farmers and farmworkers prosper. For this reason, I write to request additional information about the data you gather about Georgia's agricultural economy, how you deploy your limited resources to best inform the agricultural public, and how we can work together to support Georgia's growers as they provide important data to you.

As you know, the Department of Labor sets the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) for H-2A workers according to procedures laid out in the Code of Federal Regulations. These procedures rely on data from the Farm Labor Survey, published semiannually by NASS. Georgia consistently ranks in the top three states using the H-2A program, so the results of this survey are of paramount importance to Georgia growers.

For the purposes of the Farm Labor Survey, Georgia is part of the Southeast region, along with Alabama and South Carolina. However, Georgia uses significantly more H-2A labor than its neighbors: In Fiscal Year 2023, there were 37,536 H-2A positions certified in Georgia — nearly 10 percent of the nation's total — while South Carolina and Alabama had 7,522 and 2,141, respectively¹.

I stand ready to work with you to support Georgia's growers as they inform you about their hard work to feed our Nation. To that end, I respectfully request responses to the following questions:

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN
RIGHTS AND THE LAW

OSSOFF.SENATE.GOV

1. Will you commit to providing semiannual sessions to provide assistance to Georgia growers who are selected to fill out the Farm Labor Survey, in coordination with other USDA agencies as appropriate?
2. How many Georgia growers were selected to complete the Farm Labor Survey and received instructions about how to do so in 2023?
3. Please provide the justification for why Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina are grouped together as a sampling population for the purposes of conducting the Farm Labor Survey.
4. How many USDA employees are tasked with data collection for the Farm Labor Survey for the Southeast region in general, and for Georgia specifically?
5. Aside from setting the AEW, what are the most common uses of Farm Labor Survey data?
6. What additional resources would NASS require to produce estimates and inferences specific to Georgia through the process of conducting the Farm Labor Survey?

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

ⁱ Source: U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, Disclosure Data, Performance Data: H-2A Program – FY2023.