

The New York Times

5-12-2013

New York Times (Letters)

Deplorable Labor Practices of Some U.S. Farmers

By Bruce Goldstein

[“U.S. Workers Sue as Big Farms Rely on Immigrants”](#) (front page, May 7), about race bias on farms in Georgia, unveils the self-serving stereotypes many farmers use as a justification for deplorable labor practices.

Guest workers’ “nonimmigrant” status allows growers to abuse guest workers to protect their bottom lines, an option generally not available to other private employers. These programs serve as a barrier for domestic agricultural workers while depressing wages and working conditions for the entire work force.

Americans are hardly incapable of agricultural labor; in fact, roughly 600,000 United States citizens and lawful permanent residents work on farms. Absurd claims like “domestics just don’t have their hearts in it,” as a lawyer from a Georgia farm quoted in the article says, reflect employers’ ability to impose onerous working conditions for low pay on foreign guest workers and undocumented workers that American workers won’t accept.

Agricultural employers should end their discriminatory labor practices. And Congress should help improve conditions in the fields by creating a road map to citizenship for immigrant workers and for any future farmworkers as well.

BRUCE GOLDSTEIN
President, Farmworker Justice
Washington, May 7, 2013

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/opinion/deplorable-labor-practices-of-some-us-farmers.html>