



Farmworker Justice Statement: Our Dedication to Helping Farmworker Families Confront the Challenges of COVID-19

Farmworker Justice is collaborating with farmworker-serving organizations and many other organizations to help farmworker families confront the very serious challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are gathering information and devising strategies to help farmworkers and their organizations advance solutions for the health and well-being of farmworkers, their children and their communities.

FJ has a long history of working on health, occupational safety, labor and immigration issues using a diverse set of tools. These tools include collecting, analyzing and disseminating information for farmworker-serving organizations and farmworkers themselves; policy and legal analysis and advocacy; training and technical assistance; corporate social responsibility initiatives; public education; and coalition-building. All these tools and more are needed now.

There are about 2.5 million farmworkers in the U.S., not including their spouses and children. Farmworkers are not alone in the threats they face from the COVID-19, but they are among the most vulnerable. Farmworkers often are in unique circumstances that cause them to be especially vulnerable during public health crises.

Farm work ranks among the most dangerous jobs in terms of deaths and injuries, while also remaining among the lowest-paid occupations in the nation. Fringe benefits such as paid sick leave or health insurance are rarely offered. Federal and state labor laws often discriminatorily exclude agricultural workers from basic protections. Farmworkers often live in crowded, unsafe housing in isolated geographic areas. And a majority of farmworkers are undocumented immigrants. All of these factors exacerbate the potential impact of public health crises on the farmworker community.

The current COVID-19 crisis highlights the inadequacies and the inextricable links between our broken health care and immigration systems. In addition, the nature

of farm work means that telecommuting is not an option and there are serious limits to social distancing and other mitigation measures.

The many concerns farmworker families face regarding COVID-19 include the following:

- Lost work and lost wages and the serious consequences that follow
- Lack of unemployment compensation
- Lack of health insurance/ inability to become insured
- Lack of access to health care
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of adequate education and nutrition programs when schools close
- Unsanitary, crowded housing and the risk of losing housing due to job loss
- Lack of paid sick leave
- Impacts of the broken immigration system
 - lack of immigration status for a majority of farmworkers
 - threats of immigration enforcement
 - uncertainty regarding the H-2A agricultural guestworker program
 - closing of U.S. consulates' visa processing
- Lack of access to accurate, timely, information in appropriate languages
- Stress and anxiety and lack of mental health resources

Farmworker Justice will continue its efforts to help farmworkers confront these and many other challenges. As this crisis evolves, we will also provide updated information and resources.

Our staff is following CDC guidelines to keep themselves, families and co-workers safe; we are all telecommuting. We are thinking of all the farmworker families we serve, our many collaborators and our supporters, at this difficult time.

Thank you for your support.