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Foreign-born workers' effect on agricultural industry in Iowa

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FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS' EFFECT ON AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN IOWA

A Thesis Submitted
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“The land flourished because it was fed from so many sources—because it was nourished by so many cultures and traditions and peoples.” – Lyndon B. Johnson

Introduction

It is no secret that Iowa’s reputation relies heavily on farms. Several years ago, a woman from California actually asked me if I ride my tractor to school. I wish I could tell you that was just a fun hook to get you interested in my paper, but it happened. Farming is a part of Iowa’s culture and an essential piece of the state’s economy. Iowa is one of the main pork, corn, and soybean producers in the United States, and its farming roots extend deep into the state’s rich soil.

How has the state consistently produced record level amounts of these crops and livestock? That is a loaded question, but a main factor of production is labor. Especially with livestock, manual labor is necessary to tend to the animals and to monitor the entire process, from the animal’s birth to the meat counter. Farm laborers come from different backgrounds, origins, and upbringings, but they all assist in the production of crops and livestock that play a large role in Iowa’s economy.

This thesis will be an assessment of the economic effects in agriculture due to a change in immigration laws. A study of past and present laws will be detailed to track the most significant changes, as well as fluctuations in agricultural economics, focused primarily on Iowa. Analyzing the literature, statistics, and various expert opinions will assist in answering the question: Do immigration laws significantly affect agriculture labor, and thus, production in Iowa?

Brief History on Immigration Laws

Beginning in the early years of the United States' existence as a formalized nation (late 1700's), there was an open door policy and unimpeded immigration. Any kind of immigration to the United States was encouraged for the initial one hundred years. In fact, forced migration was the most prevalent type of immigration in the farm labor production sector. The first immigration restrictions were enacted in 1875, which excluded convicts and prostitutes, and in 1882, the first general federal immigration law was enacted (Kurzban 1992, 1). This was the first immigration law to put extensive restrictions on specific immigration groups. Several years later, in the late-nineteenth century, the Bureau of Immigration was created from the Immigration Act of 1891, which existed as the inaugural national law for the control of immigration. Many of the immigration laws leading up to the twentieth century centered on the exclusion of criminals, the diseased, and the mentally disabled.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the Immigration Act evolved with the broadening of deportation classes, the establishment of quotas, and the modification of departure logistics. Congress established the first quota system in 1921, which remained essentially unchanged until 1952 (Kurzban 1992, 4). A kink in this system occurred in 1942 when Mexico and the United States entered into the Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement. This legally transported 4.6 million Mexican laborers to the United States in a timespan of the next 24 years (Congressional Digest 2018). This legislation extended throughout the country and provided temporary agricultural laborers to the U.S. during World War II. In this time, farms became reliant on this new set of agricultural workers.

In the following years, immigration laws specified amendments for refugees and combatted race and sex discrimination, which showed consistency with other social reforms of the late 20th century. Some of the most notable legislation includes the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (established penalties against employers hiring undocumented people) and the Immigration Act of 1990 (established a more flexible level of family, employment, and diversity-based visas) (Kurzban 1992, 8-9). During the 1990's, this type of legislation increased the cap for immigrants while it simultaneously escalated criminal penalties for immigration-related violations. The terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 lead to provisions in the USA PATRIOT Act and increased the difficulty of entering the country. It also transferred the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

More recently, in 2012, the Obama administration implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) through Executive action, which covered individuals who entered the United States as children and do not hold a lawful immigration status. These “participants are referred to as Dreamers after the DREAM Act, bipartisan legislation first proposed in 2001;” however, President Trump ended the DACA program in September of 2017 (Congressional Digest 2018). As of 2018, the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services will no long accept any new requests for deferred action, but will obtain requests for renewal of grants. Another recent change in legislation affects individuals under Temporary Protected Status (TPS). In order to qualify for this designation, a person's home country must have become unsafe during the time the person was in the United States, and returning home would put that person at risk. The Trump Administration is slowly tapering TPS, which would lead to more deportations

and illegal residents. The effects of evolving legislation influence the labor force because the legality of a person influences their decision or ability to remain in the country, let alone the labor force.

Immigration and Labor Force Statistics

In order to gain a better understanding on the current immigration status of the United States of America, I analyzed data from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). The mission of MPI is to improve immigration policies through nonpartisan research, analysis, and dialogues. According to MPI, the United States has been the leading destination for international immigrants for over 50 years and holds one-fifth of the world's migrants as of 2017. The percentage of immigrants in the total U.S. population continues to rise, and using American Community Survey data, immigrants accounted for 13.5 percent of the total U.S. population and numbered 43.7 million in 2016. *Figure 1* shows the change in the immigrant population in the U.S. over a span of 50 years.

Figure 1

Year	Size of Immigrant Population (Millions)	Immigrant Share of Total U.S. Population
1970	9.6	4.7%
1980	14.1	6.2%
1990	19.8	7.9%
2000	31.1	11.1%
2010	40.0	12.9%
2016	43.7	13.5%

“Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2016 American Community Surveys (ACS), and 1970-2000 decennial Census data” (MPI).

Latin American populations dominate the breakdown of the immigrant source countries, especially Mexico, which contributes 26 percent of United States immigrants (MPI).

Figure 2 and *Figure 3* show the distribution of source country immigrant groups in 1960 and 2016, respectively (MPI).

Figure 2

Top Ten Largest U.S. Immigrant Groups, 1960

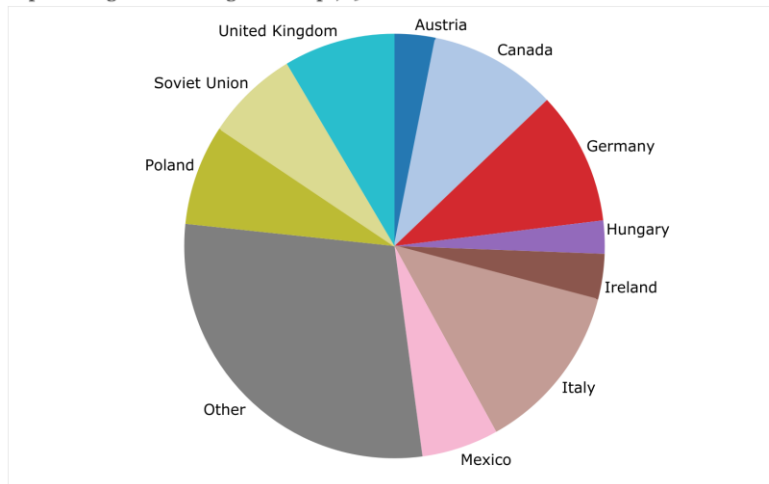
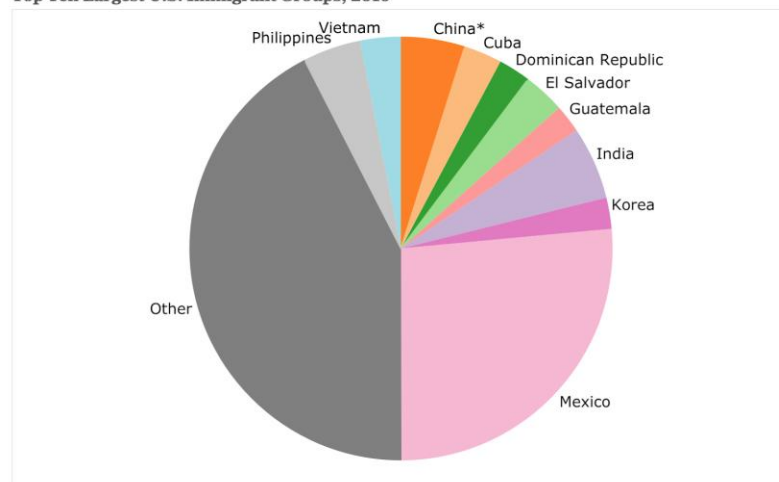


Figure 3

Top Ten Largest U.S. Immigrant Groups, 2016



According to further studies through MPI, about 45 percent (19.6 million) of immigrants classified themselves as having Hispanic or Latino origins. When looking at the U.S. Hispanic population as a whole, the majority is native born, and about 34 percent

are immigrants. Currently, net migration from Mexico is negative and Central American migration numbers are increasing. However, Mexican immigrants contribute the most workers to the U.S. labor force over any other immigrant group. In fact, their participation rate in the civilian labor force for persons 16 years old and up is 69 percent, which is greater than the total immigrant labor force participation rate (66 percent) and the native born population (62 percent) (MPI). *Figure 4* and *Figure 5* show the immigrant share of the U.S. population and civilian labor force between the years 1980 and 2016. *Figure 4* represents the entire United States and *Figure 5* shows the data from Iowa (MPI).

Figure 4

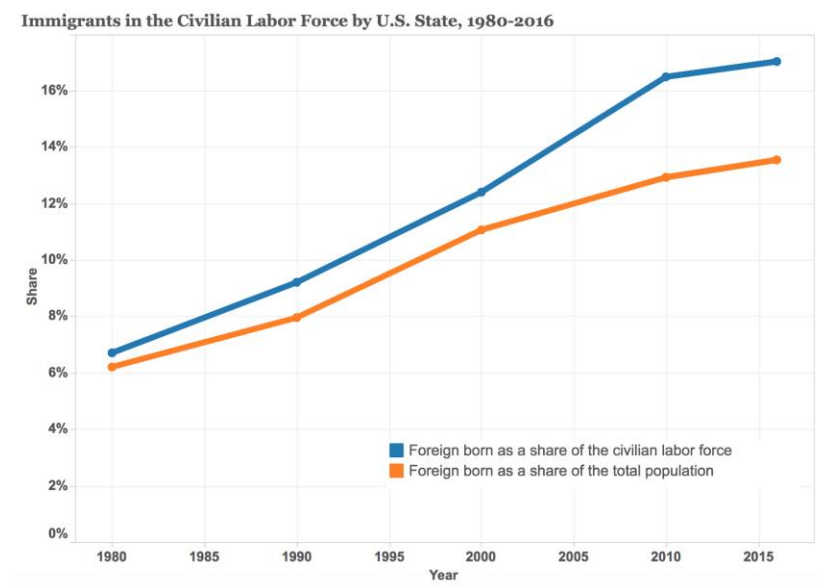
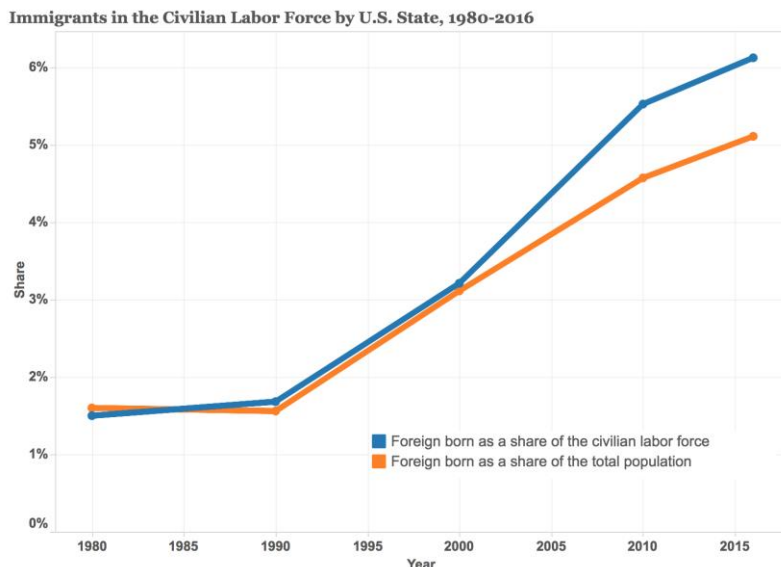


Figure 5



In order to narrow the scope of total U.S. immigration information, MPI tracks immigrant data from each state. Iowa's immigrant population is 5.1 percent of the state's total population as of 2016. The most dominant race is Latino, which constitutes 37 percent of the foreign-born population in Iowa.

Current Agriculture Production in Iowa

The United States Department of Agriculture, the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, and the National Agricultural Statistical Services (NASS) each provide extensive data on Iowa agricultural production. Every fall NASS releases data that contains information on the previous year. The most recent published statistics from 2017 were consulted for this study.

Some interesting statistics on Iowa's dominance in several agriculture spheres are as follows, according to NASS data (2018):

- Iowa ranked first in:
 - Corn for Grain Production and Export Value

- Total Acres of Principal Crops Harvested
- Egg Production
- Hogs and Pigs Inventory & Value
- Pork Export Value
- Commercial Hog Slaughter
- Iowa ranked second in:
 - Soybean Production and Export Value
 - Red Meat Production
 - Total Value of Agricultural Exports
 - Net Farm Income

I analyzed the summary tables for crops and livestock. The categories for crops include corn, corn for grain, corn for silage, soybeans, oats, hay/alfalfa, hay (other), and wheat, and the data is tracked from 2013 to 2017. Interestingly, the amount harvested decreased for every category except soybeans. While the number of acres harvested for oats and wheat set record lows in 2017, the yield of bushels of wheat set a record high. Also, crop labor costs have increased across the board from 2014 to 2018. When looking at livestock data, the four categories include cattle, hogs, sheep, and chickens. In 2017, Iowa set two record highs, hog inventory beginning on December 1st and hog marketings. Production and sales have increased in absolute terms from 1960 to 2016, and a specific factor that might have contributed to those numbers is foreign-born laborers.

In summary, some of Iowa's most prominent agriculture statistics are that 85 percent of Iowa is used for farmland, the state ranks first in corn and egg production in the United States, and one-third of the country's hogs are raised in Iowa (Iowa

Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship). Not only do many Iowa residents take pride in the state's substantial contribution to the nation's agriculture industry, but these numbers also represent the significance of these productions on Iowa's economy. Even though there are many factors outside of the labor force that contribute to agriculture production, through my research I investigated those factors most closely related to a change in the labor force, possibly due to a change in immigration laws.

Economic Factors and Theory

Core economic principles of immigration and labor supply are discussed from the textbook "Labor Economics" by George J. Borjas. However, it is important to note that although economics is an excellent lens through which to analyze migration patterns, it has limitations. Migration is a human (and animal) phenomenon, so it cannot be adequately interpreted via just one set of theories. In order to try to isolate foreign-born agricultural workers' contributions to farm production, we must look at what first causes immigration. The two main factors that the migration decision depends on are the economic conditions in the destination and origin regions, and on migration costs. As one would guess, the lower the income is in the origin state and the higher the incomes are in the destination state, the probability of migration increases. This is assumed through one of the neoclassical economic assumptions that more is better, and in this case, more money is always preferred. Another factor that increases the probability of migration is the total migration cost. A lower cost will raise the probability that someone is willing to move, and higher migration costs will discourage migration. A worker is indifferent between migrating or staying if the discounted gains from moving equal migration costs

exactly. The equation that represents this is below, where M = migration costs, r = the discount rate and w = the wage rate (example regions are the US and Puerto Rico).

$$M = \frac{(1 + r)(w_{US} - w_{PR})}{r}$$

A different aspect that will also affect the decision to migrate and the decision to work (if migrated) looks at the family. Families, rather than single workers, make most migration decisions, so the decision to move is based on whether the entire family is perceived to likely be better off. This gets complicated because family structures are very unique, and some are even quite informal. If the family's net gains are positive, the family will move. When looking at a family with a husband and wife, this looks like:

$$\Delta PV_H + \Delta PV_W > 0$$

The ΔPV for both the husband and the wife shows the change in the present value of his or her earnings stream if he or she were to move. Again, if the combination of the two is positive, the family will move. This decision may alter with a change in law, such as the possible ruling that H1-B workers' spouses will no longer have work authorization. Net gains may look very different than previously if an immigrant's spouse is legally forbidden to work any type of job. This decision to move creates "tied movers" and "tied stayers," which explains how someone will stay in a region where they are not receiving the best possible employment opportunities or leave a region where they do have the best opportunities because his or her spouse is better off in the alternative region. Especially in international migration decisions, there is a complication of private incentives not aligning with family incentives. Many times this results in one family member moving to work who then sends money to the family in the origin region.

The economic benefits from immigration consider many factors and reach different extents. As Borjas explains, “the economic impact of immigration will depend on the skill composition of the immigrant population,” and low-skilled and high-skilled workers will have different effects (324). After initial arrival to the United States, many immigrants will lack U.S.-specific professional skills (language, educational credentials, etc.) that will put them at earnings below those of natives. As they assimilate their earnings grow faster than natives, and they even tend to out-earn natives in the long run. A popular explanation to this phenomenon states that immigrants are not randomly selected from the origin country’s population. This argues that people moving their entire lives to a new countries must possess exceptional abilities and character traits that are associated with successful people. Granted there are many causes for immigration, the motivation to start a new life in an unknown country correlates with a strong desire to be successful in the country of destination.

Borjas explains the extent to which immigrant laborers will affect the wage and demand of native workers depends partly on the skill makeup of the natives. Low-skilled natives and immigrants are substitutes, and high-skilled natives and immigrants are complements. This is due to the substitution effect where the skillset of low-skilled natives and immigrants are essentially interchangeable, whereas the skillset of high-skilled natives cannot be replaced with an increase in immigrant laborers. An example of this substitution effect is seen in the corn detasseling business. Detasseling is relatively tedious and uneventful work, which makes it a low-skill type of job that many high school kids do in the summer. This is also a common job for immigrants. The low level of human capital assumed of high school students make them substitutes with immigrants

in this job. If a large influx of immigrants arrived in a rural town that was in need of detassellers, and they were willing to accept a lower wage than high school students, those students might be back to flipping burgers for a couple months.

The decision for an individual to migrate relies on more than just their potential wage and working conditions, and could include family, religion, international politics, climate change, and other factors that cannot be found in hard data. Again, the complexity of the decision to migrate can be seen through economic analysis, but not fully. With a bit more clarity, the economic effects on the destination country can be seen through the change in labor force, and at times, the level of production.

The economics of labor markets is a large field of study, and the research on the immigration portion of the labor market is just a sliver. However, it has become a growing topic of interest in recent years, in part due to politically-charged conversations and the evolving immigration policies. The next section will focus on the most influential effects that the economy experiences during a change in the labor market.

Effect on Size of Labor Force

When a group of the population decreases, whether it is due to deportation, stricter border control or other various causes, the number of skilled and unskilled laborers will inevitably diminish. While each industry uses a different level of immigrant workers, the agriculture industry directly employs foreign-born workers. The change in quantity of laborers may affect the agriculture economy in facets related to production of goods, quality of yield, or even farmer's profits. Based on a study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, a reduction in foreign-born workers would reduce the total number of farm workers by 3.4 to 5.5 percent

(GlobeNewswire 2018). This is not to say that foreign-born workers account for 3.4 to 5.5 percent of farm laborers, but instead explains how stricter immigration policies would actually change the demand for laborers. There would be an overall loss in total number of farm workers due to increasing labor costs and farmers pursuing less labor-intensive work. The proportion of foreign-born workers in the agriculture industry is significant. More specifically, undocumented individuals are huge contributors to the agriculture labor force. In the fiscal year from 1999 to 2000, the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that undocumented, foreign-born people accounted for about 55 percent of the domestic crop workforce and dropped to about 53 percent in early 2000's (Levine 2009, 1).

Especially in a farm-heavy state like Iowa, the agriculture industry dominates a portion of the economy and the state's major outputs. The market supply of Iowa's goods relies on workers who drive Iowa's agricultural output. For example, "[l]abor availability was one of several factors that played into the rapid decline of the market for Iowa cattle producers in October 2015," and further labor reductions could cause other productions to experience losses (Fatka 2018). The labor required to succeed in the raising of livestock highlights the importance of the recruiting process and maintenance of workers. A problem, therefore, arises with the implementation of stringent immigration policies, making "it harder to recruit workers for pork producers, who have historically relied on immigrants for a third of their workforce" (Chem.info 2018). As immigration law evolves, and has most recently become stricter, employers are facing hiring issues in two major ways. The first is that these policies encourage the hiring of United States citizens, but many times their human capital is beyond what the lower-level work requires. So the potential workers move on to senior roles with better opportunities and compensation

(Bates 2018). The other issue is that these policies create so many administrative costs making it difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to hire foreign workers. Employers are experiencing increased hiring costs, paperwork, and delays throughout the entire process (Bates 2018).

The effect that immigrants have on the labor force when they choose to participate (growing the total labor force) is quite telling in terms of how they would affect the labor force if they were to leave. Rather than directly competing with native workers, low-skilled immigrants work in jobs that would not exist if these immigrants were not present (Linton 2002, 63). If they were to leave, what would happen to those jobs? Low-skilled native workers might fill the positions, but even that is not guaranteed because the existence of the job is partnered with the existence of the immigrant workers. The effects of a complete absence of these workers are unknown because the United States has such an in-depth history of employing foreign-born agricultural workers. They fill occupational niches that may not exist in their absence (Linton 2002, 70). If they leave, gaps in the agriculture industry might open that were masked by the immigrant employment.

When looking at the supply of immigrant workers, it is important to distinguish between the causes for a change in the labor force. If the immigrant workforce were to significantly decrease, an analysis of other possible exogenous factors is necessary (Linton 2002, 61). For example, was the decline of immigrant workers due to a decrease in wage, a hostile community, or a new law that affects their ability to work? Was it a combination of all three? When immigration policies are altered, the Iowa economy is

affected by more than just the change in the labor force within the agriculture industry.

Effect on Production and Prices of Goods

Not only does a change in immigration policies and legislation affect the size of the labor force, it influences the economy, such as the production levels and prices of goods as well. While research has investigated the impacts of the labor shortage in the agriculture industry, it does not provide comprehensive solutions to this problem. Further, GlobeNewswire (2018) explains the economic and social effects of the dwindling quantity of farm workers. These include the suffering of animal health and well being leading to the shutdown of agricultural facilities and severe financial harm for farmers and rural communities. This alters the overall production of goods, along with the industry's total supply.

In addition to impacting the overall production of crops or livestock, the lack of laborers can also alter factors outside of the direct production, such as the lifestyle of the remaining workers. If the entire facility closes its doors, nobody retains their job. In the end, the goal is to produce output, make a profit, pay employees, and feed people; however, a study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service proves that a reduction in the foreign-born workforce does not necessarily lead to that outcome. Economists from Iowa State University analyzed this study and found that native-born workers and permanent residents do not offset the contraction of the foreign-born workforce. In fact, this decline, prompted by a change in immigration policy, causes a "tighter supply of foreign-born workers" and "would reduce overall demand for workers as production costs increase and would decrease agricultural output as farmers abandon labor-intensive operations" (GlobeNewswire 2018). Extending out from an

economic perspective, the lack of supply of workers paired with the large necessity for them creates an environment of negotiation that favors the few workers. This shows potentially detrimental effects on farmers' profits.

With the prices of inputs steadily increasing, many farmers' budgets remain strained in order to provide the necessities to continue operations, let alone to make a profit. An example of this problem is in the situation of "John Weber, who raises pigs and grows corn and soybeans with his son about 100 miles northeast of Des Moines" who as of July, 2018 "said many farmers' budgets were already tight going into this growing season," which allows small margins for possible increases in labor or other input costs (Chem.info 2018). This Iowa farmer's strain on resources shows the financial uncertainty in the agriculture industry. As the market becomes more competitive, narrow, and dependent on consistent work, a change in the foreign-born workforce may affect the production of goods, as well as the profits of farmers.

Other laws, such as strict trade tariffs and quotas, could also affect American production. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the United States imports more than \$115 billion in agriculture products, \$9.5 billion of which are from Mexico. As the Trump Administration discusses the potential tightening of trade with Mexico, domestic agricultural laborers become more important (Thorn 2017, 34). Domestic producers must compensate for the decrease in supply from international sources; thus, the agriculture industry will face a much larger demand than they did previously.

Case Study- Georgia HB87

The aftermath of the passing of HB (house bill) 87 in Georgia in 2011 shows consequences of a change in immigration law. HB 87 is an anti-illegal immigration bill

that requires businesses with more than 10 employees to use E-verify to check prospective employees' work eligibility. It allows the police to check and determine the status of some immigrants, and it increases penalties for the intentional transportation of undocumented immigrants and the use of false identification to secure employment. This law is extremely similar to Arizona's SB (senate bill) 1070.

The enormous amount of farm laborers exiting the state, most of which were undocumented, was one of the initial effects of this bill (Esses, Brochu, and Dickson 2012, 136). They relocated to states with less strict laws. With the mass exodus of workers, farmers scrambled to try to fill those job openings, but it was fiscally unfeasible to hire at wages previously paid to immigrants. According to a survey conducted by Gary Black, Georgia's Agriculture Commissioner, Georgia farmers were left with a labor shortage of around 11,000 workers in the middle of the season (Mcardle 2011). The state faced an extreme labor shortage and many unharvested crops. In fact, this resulted in an estimated \$300 million in lost crops and potential losses of around \$1 billion for the entire season in Georgia's agricultural sector (Asbed and Sellers 2011). While the effect of immigrant workers might be unseen at times, their contribution to the agriculture industry's stability becomes most prevalent when they are gone.

Expert Opinions

The following experts have unique perspectives, qualifications, and opinions as immigration attorneys. They give insight into some of the complicated areas of immigration as well as personal experiences with clientele.

Yer Vang

Yer Vang was the first expert with whom I spoke. She obtained her JD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has been practicing law for over 18 years, mostly in immigration law. She focuses on family-based immigration law, as well as asylum and deportation defense for unaccompanied immigrant youth. Attorney Vang was a child refugee, and after navigating the tough immigration process herself, she wanted to help others and to be an advocate. She currently works for Catholic Charities, which is the “social service arm of the Archdiocese of Dubuque that responds to changing social needs to provide help and create hope for the most vulnerable populations in northeast Iowa.” It is an organization that serves anyone regardless of faith, but primarily focuses on people who could not otherwise afford an attorney on their own.

Although immigrants face a diverse range of obstacles when migrating to a new country, Attorney Vang notes the most prevalent one being work authorization. This was a common finding among all my conversations with the experts. This affects the types of jobs immigrants take as well as the percentage of immigrants that decide to work. The increase in ICE enforcement has created a sense of fear and anxiety. Immigrants that are able and willing to work might avoid working as more restrictive immigration policies become more prevalent. A change in the law might not only prevent the actual hiring of immigrant workers, but it can affect the supply of workers too. The number of those who are willing to risk deportation in order to work may drop drastically as the presence of ICE in communities increases. Another law that Attorney Vang said has changed the culture and mindset of immigration in Iowa is the state law SF 481. This law requires local law enforcement to “comply with any instruction” asked in a detainer request to

hold people, potentially without a warrant or probable cause. She explained that the fear this law brings to all immigrants has caused many people to abandon their jobs especially in the dairy or agricultural industry.

In comparison with other regions of the country, the job opportunities for immigrants in Iowa develop around the rural demographics of the state. Attorney Vang's clientele rely on agricultural-based jobs because of Iowa's economy and the opportunities available. Those who live in bigger cities may find work in food service industries, for example. When looking at Iowa's immigration labor force, many workers historically have come here specifically for the farm and agriculture opportunities, but recently that has changed. Since more restrictive immigration policies have been passed in Iowa in the last two years, there has been a pattern of immigrant workers seeking similar types of jobs in neighboring states, such as Wisconsin, Illinois, or Nebraska. As I asked Attorney Vang my research question, she replied that yes, immigration laws significantly affect agriculture labor and production here in Iowa, both directly and indirectly.

Miryam Antúnez de Mayolo

Miryam Antúnez de Mayolo works for Catholic Charities and has been an immigration attorney for over 20 years. She is from Lima, Peru and decided to go into immigration law after she herself migrated to the U.S. and faced many difficult situations. Attorney Antúnez is a native speaker of Spanish and also speaks English. She uses Spanish everyday, and notes that about 50% of her clients are Spanish speakers. Between empathy and bilingualism, she felt drawn to this type of work. In regards to the legal immigration system, she believes that it is outdated and causes issues for every party involved, not just the immigrants.

The two biggest factors in the decision to work that Attorney Antúnez explained are work authorization and lack of transportation. Although hiring someone to work without legal authorization is a crime, working without authorization is not. In fact, it's not even a misdemeanor. However, if people use false documents to secure work authorization, they may be prosecuted. Without work authorization, immigrants do not have a way to legally work or make money, so they are faced with the option of taking the risk in order to provide for their family. Attorney Antúnez discussed how many of her clients live day-to-day in a cloud of fear and are constantly gauging if the risk is worth the reward. This is especially found in transportation. There is no way to get a driver's license without a social security number, and the most minor traffic violation holds the potential of deportation. An alternative method of getting to work is public transportation. Unfortunately, Iowa only has public transportation in the larger cities—areas that are not flooded with farms. Thus, if an immigrant is trying to work an agriculture job, the need for transportation to the rural area becomes increasingly important.

The dynamic field of immigration law highlights constantly changing implications that immigrants face. Some of the legal issues that she explained were DACA, the complexity of visas, and the change in the provisional waiver of inadmissibility. DACA has made a difference in the lives of young people, allowing them to go to college and increasing their ability to find a job in the future. In terms of the workforce, this legislation has provided more immigrants with educational opportunities that change the makeup of the immigrant workforce. DACA is not accepting new applicants at this time, so people who were once eligible for the program must seek alternative routes. Attorney Antúnez said that trying to match clients up with programs

they are eligible for is one of the most difficult parts of her job. The complexity of different visas is hard enough on its own, but with changing laws it becomes difficult to advise clients and begin application processes. Immigrants who want to work may hit roadblocks when applying for visas because some people just do not qualify for anything. This stunts progress in receiving work authorization and necessary documents. On the contrary, a change in 2013 has helped the process slightly. This change allows people to ask for a provisional waiver of inadmissibility within the United States rather than having to leave the country for months at a time. People will still need to leave the country for two to four weeks, but it is a sped up process that is now more accessible.

In response to the question I asked each expert (“Do immigration laws significantly affect agriculture labor, and thus, production in Iowa?”), Attorney Antúñez said that they absolutely affect the dairy and hog industries for sure. She noted that many of the laborers in those industries get paid under the table, so it is hard to find data on them. While she does not know the extent to which farmers in Iowa rely on their immigrant labor force, she confirmed that they definitely play a large role in production and are affected by changing immigration laws.

Sarah Schlicher

Sarah Schlicher is an immigration attorney based out of Overland Park, Kansas. She owns her own practice, Sarah J Schlicher Law, and employs one associate attorney, two full-time assistants, and one part time law student. After graduating from the University of Northern Iowa with a Spanish major, she attended Kansas University Law School and has been practicing immigration law ever since. Her ability to speak Spanish was the main reason she decided to pursue immigration law. She uses it every single day

and says that it builds trust and a special connection when she uses their native language. By providing honest advice in Spanish, she gets a lot of referrals from her clients, which is how she has built her business.

Some of the biggest changes that Attorney Schlicher has seen throughout her time as an immigration attorney include her clientele's demographics and skill-set. More recently there has been a big influx of younger clients, mostly due to the changes in DACA. These clients usually speak English fluently and are very technology-savvy. Their contribution to the labor market is quite different than previous immigrants or even their own parents. In fact, the inclusion of DACA makes appointments twice as long because parents want all of the information in Spanish and the children want it in English. The most common occupations Sarah sees are manual labor jobs for men (agriculture, construction, maintenance, landscaping, etc.) and cleaning for women. Because many of her clients do not have work permission, these types of jobs offer the best opportunities.

Similar to the other experts, the lack of work authorization is the biggest obstacle that her clients face. Much of what she can do depends on if the person has legal status or not, yet trying to get people legal status is another obstacle. For example, there are huge processing delays in the system right now, so even if they have processed all the required documents it could take four years for her clients to become fully legal. And in the meantime, they cannot do anything else. This affects the labor supply because it tests immigrants' risk aversion mindset. During that time some people are willing to work at jobs that are not as strict about work authorization forms, while others are anchored to their fear of deportation.

In regard to laws that shape immigrant-based labor heavily, Attorney Schlicher discussed three that stand out to her: DACA, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), and the U Visa. DACA is a type of deportation relief that allows immigrant youth to remain in the United States when they otherwise would not be allowed. As a DACA recipient, a person receives an employment authorization card, which allows more people to work. This increases the labor supply. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act made immigration laws tighter and stricter than ever before. It was passed in 1996, and Attorney Schlicher explained how it affected many of clients' decisions not to work or participate in the labor force. The third law change that she discussed was the U Visa. This is a four year, temporary, non-immigrant visa that was enacted in order to encourage people to call the police during crimes, even if they do not have proper documentation. This piece of legislation has encouraged transparency between immigrants and the police, but has not necessarily affected the workforce according to Attorney Schlicher. The effects of each individual law would be hard to isolate due to the large amount of factors. Also, it would depend on the strength of each law and how they interacted with each other.

The biggest issue pertaining to the legal process that affects Attorney Schlicher's clients is the processing delay. She described the average situation of a client trying to obtain proper documentation and how that person might not see any progress in their documentation for four years. At that point they might receive a work authorization card, then wait another six years for a visa, and another three for a green card. Individuals undergoing this process cannot leave the United States otherwise they must abandon their U Visa status. This is just an example timeline, but it shows the stagnation of the whole

process. In fact, the amount of cases being filed is less than in previous years, but it is taking longer to adjudicate them. Sarah explained that when a case is denied, it is referred to deportation and currently there is a backlog of 800,000 deportation cases. The complexity and length of the process discourages her clients from filing cases and obtaining work authorization. This illustrates why there is no clear path for legalization for most undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S.

Her response to my research question (do immigration laws significantly affect agriculture labor, and thus, production?) aligned with the other immigration attorneys I consulted. She said that yes, absolutely immigration laws affect these areas of the economy. Specifically when considering a repeal of DACA and TPS, Attorney Schlicher believes it would be extremely difficult to fill positions at packing plants, agriculture fields, and construction sites. There is already a worker shortage at these places, and the reduction of foreign-born workers would add to the problem.

Another group that I reached out to was the Black Hawk County Farm Bureau because I wanted to add to the contextual situation. Knowing that they had farm production and labor statistics, I wanted to speak with some farmers and try to collect a policy statement. Unfortunately, I was unable to collect any data from them because they refused to speak with me.

One of the deciding factors in my choice to pursue interviews with these experts was the human aspect. I desired knowledge about the details and implementation of the law, but I also wanted to hear the perspective of people who work with immigrants every day. I talked to three different people representing three different areas of expertise, though all specialize in immigration law. Each attorney touched on laws that affect their

clients the most, and there was overlap between many of their responses. They all answered, “yes” to my research question: immigration laws affect agriculture labor and production.

Conclusion

Through my research, I find that many factors support the claim that a change in immigration laws significantly affects agriculture labor, and thus, production in Iowa. The state’s economy relies on this industry, as does the nation for certain food supplies. While the exact numbers and data are not easily accessible, the information that is published outlines several ways in which stricter immigration laws reduce the agriculture workforce. This, in turn, increases production costs and decreases output. Immigration law, the economics of immigration, and agriculture production are complex topics that include numerous details beyond my current understanding, so a combined study between experts in each field would be very interesting.

Some relevant extensions to this research include the married immigrant women labor force participation decision, published personal testimonies from foreign-born workers, and a more detailed analysis of visas. One of the most recent proposals of the Trump administration would prevent the spouses of H-1B visa workers who are in the green card process from entering the United States labor force. This number is currently estimated at about 90,000 people. As of 2015, the spouse of an H-1B worker is eligible for H-4 status and could receive authorization to work in the U.S. if legally married to an H-1B worker. H-1B workers are typically high-skilled professionals who specialize in fields related to science, technology, engineering, and math. The implications of this proposal are unknown, but would be an interesting area of study. If this proposal passes,

it will have a direct effect on the labor force, especially on fields that are not normally associated with immigrant workers.

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