By 2026, nearly 25 percent of the U.S. workforce will be 55 and older. The agricultural and food sectors hold more than 21 million full and part-time jobs, and that number continues to rise annually. This means that in less than nine years, more than 5.35 million jobs will be available in the agriculture and food sectors. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) urges development of a high quality and expanded workforce. And NASDA stands ready to help.

A NEED FOR WORKERS IN A TIGHTENING LABOR MARKET

Agriculture workforce challenges are two-tiered:
• Domestic workforce
• H-2A migrant and seasonal workforce

As unemployment remains low, the tightening labor market impacts agriculture because of the challenging nature of the work and lack of knowledge of employment opportunities.

Domestic employers and workers need funding for apprenticeships and work-based training. This will require action from Congress and the Administration.

There are an estimated 3 million foreign workers, both documented and undocumented, in the U.S. agricultural labor force. It’s still not enough. We need a reformed H-2A program for foreign workers and a legal status for workers already performing the farm work our producers depend on. Programmatic constraints and bureaucratic confusion are huge stumbling blocks for the effectiveness of the H-2A program.

OUR ASK

NASDA encourages the federal government to recognize career pathways in the food, agriculture and natural resource industries and make necessary investments in these focus areas to develop a secure, reliable workforce. NASDA urges Congress to pass immigration reform that provides a legal, reliable workforce for farmers and ranchers and reforms the H-2A program.

NASDA is committed to working with the federal government and private industry to identify solutions to agricultural workforce challenges.