

# Dept. of Workforce Development: Wisconsin labor laws keep ag economy strong

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MADISON, Wis. – Food on the table has its start on the farm and each year approximately 5,000 seasonal agricultural migrant workers come to Wisconsin to plant, harvest, and package a broad range of fruits and vegetables produced in the state.

International Migrants Day is celebrated each year on Dec. 18. The day highlights the importance of protecting the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, a concept Wisconsin furthers through state and federal regulations administered by the state Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

“Wisconsin sets a high bar for labor standards to ensure safety, fair pay and dignity of all workers. That’s why Wisconsin has specific protections for migrants employed in seasonal agricultural work,” DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said. “The pride in our farm products recognizes the contributions of those working in the fields and at processing facilities.”

Wisconsin stands out as one of the few states with laws focusing on migrant workers. And this year, Wisconsin and the federal government are partnering to advance equitable access to programs such as unemployment insurance when unable to work. In June, DWD, received a \$3 million Navigator Grant from the federal government. United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) is partnering with DWD to provide assistance to those who may have limited English proficiency or challenges with computer or internet access.

Wisconsin’s migrant labor laws require all migrant labor camps to be certified by

DWD. Migrant labor contractors must apply and be certified, and migrant workers must receive the specific terms of their employment in a written recruiting disclosure statement and a migrant labor worker agreement. State migrant labor law also includes requirements related to hours worked, wages and wage statements, and sanitation for workers in the field.

DWD staff members conduct outreach to migrant seasonal farmworkers where they live and work to ensure they are receiving these protections and equitable access to services. This includes meeting with migrant seasonal farmworkers in farm fields, food processing plants, and migrant labor camps to connect them with programs and services provided at Wisconsin job centers. DWD's outreach efforts also connect migrant workers with a local contact they can reach out to if there are issues with their employer or migrant labor contractor.

DWD staff members take complaints related to workplace, employment, and housing concerns and make referrals to DWD's Equal Rights Division, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour Division, Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and other regulatory agencies.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Wisconsin can [contact DWD staff](#) located in each county to share concerns about their employment, employer, or migrant labor contractor. For questions or assistance regarding harassment, discrimination, fair housing rights, wages or labor standards, they can also contact DWD's Equal Rights Division at 608-266-6860 or at [erinfo@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:erinfo@dwd.wisconsin.gov). Multi-language assistance is available.

To learn more about DWD's Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers program, visit DWD's [Services for Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers](#) website.