Useful Tools to Improve Communication
Agricultural Workforce Development Council
Tonya Van Slyke - NEDPA
Libby Eiholzer – CCE NWNY Team

How well are we communicating?

• Agri-Mark Inc.
• Canusa Marketing
• Dairy Farmers of America, LLC.
• Upstate Niagara Cooperative Inc.
• Cornell University
• American Dairy Association North East
• North East Dairy Producers Association (NEDPA)
• NY Vegetable Growers Association
• Ag Affiliates
• Agri-Placement Services Inc.
• Bob Gray and Mike Oscar
• New York State Horticultural Society
• Farm Credit East
• NY Farm Bureau

Agricultural Workforce Development Council
Collaborators:

Founding Principles
• AWDC was formed to be proactive in developing “Best Management Practices” seeking to access those guidelines and industry standards which promote responsible care and welfare for its valuable agricultural employees.
• We recognize the success of this effort depends on the collaboration of workers and employers.
• Like all employers we want to attract and retain the best qualified workers for our family farm operations.
• Employees are critical to the success of our farm and their safety is one of our priorities.
Employer Issues
1. Failure of our government to address legal status of farm employees
2. #3 Consumer concern is treatment of employees (DMI research, Study from the Hartman Group on Transparency)
3. Farmers recognition of employee challenges - Housing, safety, communication, culture, ICE
4. Activity and support of legal proceedings from advocacy groups
5. The need to maintain a viable, long-term and dependable workforce
6. The need for education on the value of employment packages

Who are the Worker Advocates?
Worker Advocacy Organizations:
- Migrant Justice
- Worker Justice Center of Central New York
- Worker Center of CNY

Worker Advocacy Collaborations:
- Cornell Law School, Farm Worker Legal Assistance Program receiving referrals from advocacy groups
- Some Migrant Health Clinic regional concerns

The Advocates’ Issues
- Wage rate, “wage theft”
  - Overtime eligibility
  - Deduction from wage
- Number of hours/days worked
- Have a strong desire for farm workers to unionize
- Lack of socialization due to legal status
  - Access to drivers licenses - “Green Light NY: Driving Together”
- Human Trafficking, sexual harassment
- Safety Training, safe working conditions
- Inadequate Grievance Process
- Living Conditions
  - Does housing meet “standards”
  - Ongoing pest issues

Taking a Look at AWDC’s Approach to Workforce Development

Mission:
The Agricultural Workforce Development Council (AWDC) is a cross functional group of agricultural organizations, dedicated to the proactive promotion of positive on-farm employment practices and resources, in effort to ensure access to productive, well-trained and competitively compensated employees as a critical component to the future of agriculture.
Areas of Focus

1. Continue to ask for clarification and education from NYS Department of Labor on current and OLD wage and hour regulations. (Ex. 190)

2. Ongoing outreach strategy for internal and external use.
   a) Farm owner commitment to farm team/farm workers
   b) Workforce development with continuous improvement
   c) Proactive approach to prepare for incorrect reports given to media by worker advocates

3. Access current needs and develop educational materials for both farm owners and farm employees

Areas of Focus (cont.)

4. Model employment guidance package
5. Develop industry partners to collaborate on labor challenges and opportunities.
6. Identify funding needs and opportunities

Next Steps

• Finalize Housing Guidelines
• Continue working relationship with Department of Labor
• Outreach Strategy
  • Will be ongoing externally
  • Set target date for internal distribution of materials: ongoing
• Develop Training Materials Needs
  • On-farm training
  • Videos
  • New employee training
• Determine organizational direction, structure and funding

Hispanic Worker Survey

• Lots of discussion about current situation on farms
  • Very little actual data
• Hispanic Dairy Worker Survey, Maloney & Grusenmeyer, 2005
• Revamped original survey summer of 2016
  • 205 workers
  • 36 dairy producers
  • Demographics, pay, job satisfaction, etc.
Language

- We still have a ways to go!
- Management level
- Worker level

Figure 7: How Well Workers Speak English

N = 205 workers

Hours Worked

Table 4: Length of the Daily Work Shift (hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Shift (hours)</th>
<th>Number of Hours</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Length of Time of Milking Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Shift (hours)</th>
<th>Number of Farms</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Distribution of Number of Days Working Per Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Days</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wages and Benefits

Table 7: Quartiles of Hourly Wage Earned as Reported by Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>$8.50-$9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>$9.50-$9.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>$9.75-$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>$11.00-$18.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean: $10.30
Standard Deviation: $1.42
Wages and Benefits

Table 8: Quartiles of Hourly Wage Earned for Milkers as Reported by Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>Starting Hourly Wage</th>
<th>Highest Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Quartile</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$9.00-$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quartile</td>
<td>$9.01-$9.24</td>
<td>$9.76-$10.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quartile</td>
<td>$9.25-$9.49</td>
<td>$10.00-$10.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quartile</td>
<td>$9.50-$9.75</td>
<td>$10.76-$13.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>$9.24</td>
<td>$11.75-$15.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>$0.44</td>
<td>$1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Quartiles of Highest Hourly Wage for Hispanic Workers as Reported by Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>Starting Hourly Wage</th>
<th>Highest Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Quartile</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$9.00-$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quartile</td>
<td>$9.01-$9.24</td>
<td>$9.76-$10.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quartile</td>
<td>$9.25-$9.49</td>
<td>$10.00-$10.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quartile</td>
<td>$9.50-$11.00</td>
<td>$11.75-$15.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>$9.34</td>
<td>$11.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>$0.44</td>
<td>$1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Extra Benefits Provided to Worker (Worker Reported)

Figure 18: Extra Benefits Provided to Worker (Employer Reported)

 Figure 15: Job Activities Performed as Reported by Workers

[Note: Multiple responses allowed]

Figure 16: Job Activities Performed as Reported by Employers

N = 204-205 workers

N = 36 farms

Tasks Performed
Plans for Future

• How you manage housing as a landlord
• What you need to do to comply

Housing

• Clear policies, communication and follow through
  • Housing Quiz
  • Housing agreement
  • Housing rules
  • Regular housing inspections
  • Education to help resolve pest issues

Housing Quiz
Housing Agreement

• Signed by employees
• Lay the ground rules
• Is housing a term of employment?

• AWDC template reviewed by lawyers
• NYS DOL has examples to start with

Housing Rules

• Don’t have to be a big deal!
• Employees are ASKING for owner support
• Start with high frequency (1x/week)
• Then less often (1x/month)
• Follow up with areas for improvement

Housing- Cleaning Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tráiler en el Rancho</th>
<th>MANUEL</th>
<th>JAVIER</th>
<th>JUAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desayuno</td>
<td>Lunes</td>
<td>Martes</td>
<td>Miércoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semana 1</td>
<td>Baños</td>
<td>Cocina</td>
<td>Sala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semana 2</td>
<td>Cocina</td>
<td>Sala</td>
<td>Baños</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semana 3</td>
<td>Sala</td>
<td>Baños</td>
<td>Cocina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing- Inspections

• Don’t have to be a big deal!
• Employees are ASKING for owner support
• Start with high frequency (1x/week)
• Then less often (1x/month)
• Follow up with areas for improvement
Job Satisfaction

• Most gave positive responses about their jobs
• What is the most difficult thing about your job?
  • 44% - nothing is difficult/everything is good
  • Calvings, milking, long hours, sick calves
• What do you like the most?
  • 37% - everything, 22% - milking
• What could boss do to make your job better?
  • 42% - nothing, 9% - higher pay, 8% - teach new skills
• What do you like about your boss?
  • 53% - Good person: friendly, treats us well, good heart

Job Satisfaction

• We want employees to stay and feel good about their jobs.
• Positive comments due to farmers that are:
  • Making an effort to keep wages & benefits competitive
  • Provide attractive hours/scheduling
  • Listening to workers’ needs

Communication Conclusions

• Stay tuned in to your employees!
  • Open communication
  • Listening is just as important - culturally there are things that won’t come out as easily
  • Remember - it’s cultural to not want to upset the boss!
    • authoritative culture
    • If i don’t tell the boss, he can’t get upset with me!

More Information:

• Worker Housing Materials: [https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/](https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/) - click on “Bilingual” tab
  • Tonya Van Slyke, tonya@nedpa.org
  • Libby Eiholzer, peg2@cornell.edu, 607-793-4847