

The Building Hope Project



Farmworkers feed the world, but too often they go hungry themselves. A recent study in North Carolina found that nearly half of farmworker families don't have enough food year-round.

The good news is that with a modest commitment of volunteer time and money, your congregation can make all the difference. Jesus said to his followers, "Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me." We are called to put our faith into action, and right now we have a unique opportunity to connect with the workers who put food on our plates.

We are inviting congregations to participate in building projects of chicken coops and small greenhouses with farmworker families. This is a way to help them save money and supplement their nutrition. Each building project requires a donation of \$600 and requires about 12-15 volunteers for 2 partial work days (usually Saturday-Sunday).

This building project is great for youth groups, small groups, Sunday School classes, etc. We'll be working on-site with the families to get these items constructed.

We welcome your donations to this project even if your congregation or Sunday School class is unable to help with the construction.

To learn more, sign up, or donate, visit us at:
www.ncfarmworkers.org/build

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Facts About Farmworkers

Poverty: Nationally, farmworkers' average annual income is \$11,000; for a family it is approximately \$16,000. Farmworkers on the East Coast earn about 35% less than the national average.

Hard work, low pay: At 40¢ per bucket (5/8 bushel), a farmworker must pick and haul two tons of sweet potatoes to earn \$50.

Few wage protections: Most farmworkers are exempt from minimum wage laws, and all are exempt from overtime provisions, despite long work days during peak harvest.

Few benefits: Despite pervasive poverty, less than one percent of farmworkers collect general assistance welfare nationwide. Only ten percent of farmworkers report having health insurance through an employer health plan. Fewer than four out of ten workers interviewed said that they would receive unemployment benefits if out of work.

Hunger: Nearly five out of ten North Carolina farmworkers cannot afford enough food for themselves and their families.

Poor housing: Research suggests that the health of North Carolina farmworker families is at risk due to substandard housing. State regulations require only one wash tub for every 30 workers, one shower for every 10 workers, one toilet for every 15 workers, and do not require telephone access in case of emergency.

Overcrowding: Seven out of ten farmworkers on the East Coast live in crowded conditions.

Pesticide exposure: Up to 44% of farmworker families live in housing directly adjacent to agricultural fields, increasing likelihood of pesticide exposure. A 2006 study in Eastern North Carolina showed that most farmworker children are routinely exposed to pesticides.

High rates of illness: Farmworkers face higher incidences than other wage-earners of heat stress, dermatitis, urinary tract infections, parasitic infections, pesticide-related illnesses and tuberculosis. Eight out of ten North Carolina farmworkers surveyed had skin disease.

Limited Workers' Compensation: In North Carolina, very few farmworkers are covered by workers' compensation. Only farmers employing ten or more year-round workers or any H2A worker are required to carry workers' compensation insurance.

Limited access to care: Barriers to receiving health care include lack of transportation, limited hours of clinic operation, cost of health care, limited interpreter services, and frequent relocation in order to seek farm work.

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