

Understanding Farmworker Agricultural Learning Needs

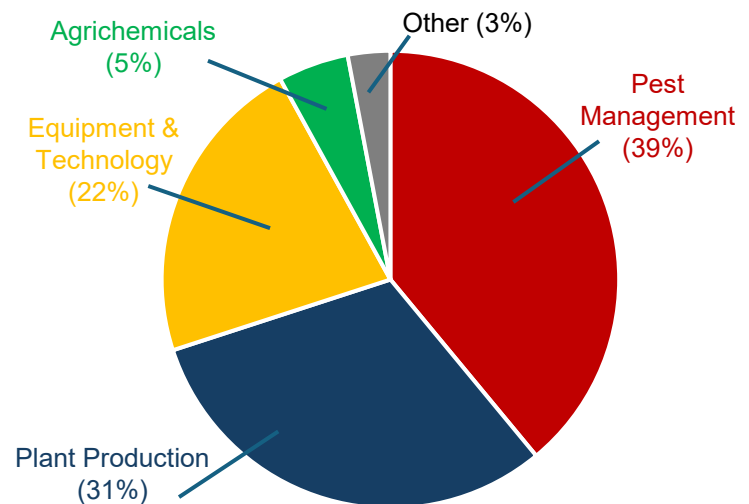
Overview

Farmworkers are valuable participants in agricultural production, but are often not included in agricultural education and extension. To engage farmworkers and improve workforce training, it is important to understand the knowledge gaps and barriers that farmworkers face. To this end, a team led by the University of California conducted focus groups with farmworkers throughout the California Central Valley. The team identified agricultural topics that farmworkers are interested in, preferred learning methods, and barriers to accessing educational resources.

Key Takeaways

- **Pest Management** emerged as the most common agricultural topic of interest among farmworkers.
- **In-person** was the preferred learning method among farmworkers. Workers valued being taught live and having the opportunity to access experts.
- **Childcare duties, financial and time constraints, and transportation challenges** were the most prevalent barriers faced by farmworkers.

California Farmworker Focus Groups' Most Common Agricultural Topics of Interest (2023-2024):



Next Steps

Partnership between agricultural topic experts and farmworker-serving organizations could result in positive learning outcomes and improved workforce competency.

Farmworkers expressed interest across a broad range of topics on which the University of California has a strong tradition of research and education.

Organizations that work with farmworkers know their communities best and hold unique insight into community needs and how to address barriers to accessibility.

Building equal partnerships from the beginning, as education and extension projects and programs are envisioned, is necessary for both short-term and long-term success.

Primary Topics of Interest

Pest Management (39%):

Sub-topics included Invertebrates (84%), Diseases (12%), and Vertebrates (2%).

Plant Production (31%):

Sub-topics included General (23%), Orchards (23%), and Grafting (18%).

Equipment & Technology (22%):

Sub-topics included Large Machinery (67%), General (27%), and Repair (3%).

Agrichemicals (5%):

Sub-topics included Pesticides (39%), Application (28%), and General (17%).

Preferred Learning Methods

In-Person:

Farmworkers expressed the most interest in in-person training to learn new material, put the information into practice, and have access to experts.

Video: Farmworkers expressed that videos would allow them to learn at their own pace, pausing to take notes or to refer to it later.

Books: Some farmworkers expressed that they learned best through books, others that reading would allow them to get an introduction to the material combined with other learning methods.

Most Common Barriers

Childcare & Family

Responsibilities: Farmworkers, especially women, stated that they would need to find childcare to attend trainings.

Financial & Time: Farmworkers expressed that the need to work to provide for their families and themselves would make it hard to miss work or pay for extension resources.

Transportation: Some farmworkers expressed that limited transportation resources would make it challenging for them to access educational programming depending on the distance needed to travel.

Methodology

Focus groups were used to understand farmworkers' agricultural topics of interest, gain a deeper understanding of their preferred learning methods, and understand the types of barriers that may prevent farmworkers from accessing extension resources once made. Groups were conducted in Spanish using guiding discussion questions. Sixteen groups were convened throughout California's Central Valley. On average, focus group interviews were an hour long and had eight farmworkers.



Additional Information

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