

AG LABOR – SECURING A WORKFORCE FOR AGRICULTURE

NCFC POSITION:

NCFC strongly supports H.R. 9535, the *Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act* (SAWA), as the best opportunity in a generation to modernize a H-2A program that hasn't been substantively updated in 40 years. SAWA delivers two long-standing NCFC priorities: year-round H-2A eligibility for the first time, and explicit recognition of farmer cooperatives as eligible filers and employers under the program. NCFC urges the House Judiciary Committee to expeditiously approve H.R. 9535 so it can advance to the House floor for consideration.

ACTION:

Congress should quickly advance H.R. 9535. The bill closes the year-round eligibility gap that has locked out dairy producers, egg and poultry, and other continuous-need operations out of H-2A, puts the Adverse Effect Wage Rate on a predictable statutory footing, and ensures without question that farmer cooperatives can use H-2A on behalf of their farmer-members.

CURRENT STATUS:

On June 30, 2026, House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson (R-PA) introduced H.R. 9535 with Rep. Don Davis (D-NC) and 48 original bipartisan cosponsors, one of the largest cosponsors list an H-2A bill has drawn in years. NCFC and more than 400 other organizations have endorsed the bill. This is the best chance in a generation to fix agriculture's labor shortage.

BACKGROUND:

American agriculture's labor shortage has been building for years. More than 300,000 H-2A visas were issued in 2024, a 2,766% increase from 1996, yet the program remains legally restricted to seasonal work, shutting out dairies, egg and poultry operations, and other employers with year-round labor needs. The U.S. has lost an estimated 175,000 farms since 2017 as workforce uncertainty squeezes producers and their farmer cooperatives.

After years of producer testimony about the inaccessibility and cost of the H-2A program, Chairman Thompson convened a bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group of Committee members to diagnose the program's root failures. The group's recommendations, finalized in 2023, became the policy foundation for SAWA. Thompson circulated a discussion draft reflecting those recommendations to stakeholders, including the Ag Workforce Coalition, in May 2026, and introduced the legislation on June 30. H.R. 9535 expands year-round eligibility, restructures the wage-setting methodology, streamlines DOL/DHS processing, and gives farmer cooperatives clear standing to use the program on their farmer-members' behalf.

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