

President's Message

If big crops get bigger and small crops get smaller, do challenging crops get challenging-er?

Most growers I have spoken with seem to be quite ready to get finished with this crop and move on to a new year. This has certainly been a year to test one's optimism. The crop that looked so promising in July has not lived up to its potential. On top of that, growers are suffering badly from a shortage of labor.

Surely better seasons are in our future. Next year's weather can't possibly be as bad as this year's. Let's hope that is true, but we can't do anything about the weather. We can, however, do something about our future labor supply. It is time for us to get serious with our government officials about repairing our broken immigration system, and providing us with reasonable access to a legal workforce. We need to start demanding a solution to our labor needs, and doing so in numbers. It is no longer enough to expect a handful of grower representatives to go to Washington DC once a year and accomplish our political goals. They have served us well, but they can't do it alone.

Please call and or write your legislators. Both Senators, as well as your member of Congress, should be hearing from YOU. Tell them your plight. Make them understand how much their inaction has cost you.

You may think you don't have time for this. You have time to put on a cover spray before a rain in May. You have time to check your pheromone traps to see if your crop is at risk from insects. This is no different. It must be done, if we are to secure our future.

You may think it won't make a difference. The American Farm Bureau has learned how effective a campaign can be when a concerted effort is made by a large group of farmers, even though we make up less than 2% of the population. They know we vote, and they know that Americans care about American Agriculture.

Your efforts are what's needed. Please pick up the phone, write a letter, or send an email. Don't be angry. Be honest and specific about your labor problems. Let them know that all we are looking for is an available, legal workforce. Tell them it's time for them to be leaders, rather than just following the political winds of the day.

Do it today. Tomorrow it will be forgotten. You'll have trucks to load, bins to move, and hopefully pickers to pay. So I repeat. Do it today.

I wish you good fortune in completing your harvest, as well as good health, happiness and a profit margin when the crop is all in.

Chris Baugher
SHAP President