



# Children in the Fields Campaign

## Improving the Quality of Life for Farmworker Children

Today in America, thousands of children work in agriculture with very few labor protections. These children often sacrifice their health, education, and childhood.

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs' **Children in the Fields Campaign** strives to improve the quality of life of migrant and seasonal farmworker children by advocating for enhanced educational opportunities and the elimination of the discriminatory federal child labor laws in agriculture.

### Unequal Employment Protections

Farmworker children receive an unequal standard of protection under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, allowing them to work in hazardous conditions deemed illegal in every other industry.

- Current U.S. child labor law allows children as young as 12 years old to legally work an unlimited amount of hours outside of school.
- Agriculture exemptions lower the "hazardous work" age to just 16 years old, while hazardous work in other every other industry is strictly reserved for adults.

### Dangerous Working Conditions

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimated in 1998 that more than 100,000 children and adolescents are injured on farms annually. Dangers include:

- **Pesticides** - Farmworkers regularly work in fields treated with pesticides — some of them are known carcinogens.
- **Environmental conditions** - Farmworkers often work 10- to 12-hour days in excruciating weather conditions.
- **Dangerous machinery and tools** - Children labor around heavy machinery with sharp tools created for adults.

### Educational Impacts

Farmworker children often do not attend school regularly and may fall behind in their studies. In addition, many face language and cultural barriers that further impede their educational development.

**AFOP has evidence that shows more than half of migrant farmworker youth drop out of high school.**



Agricultural work is consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S., according to Department of Labor statistics, and it is **the most dangerous industry for children.**



Using data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey and the GAO, AFOP estimates that there are between **400,000 and 500,000** child farmworkers in the U.S.

# National Grassroots Campaign

Since 1997, AFOP has advocated for stronger federal child labor laws through its **Children in the Fields Campaign**. Through its national partnership, advocates to publicize the plight of this hidden population. It has used its extensive network of member agencies to inform the public and advocate for federal legislation that would strengthen the child labor safeguards in agriculture so that they are just as protective as those in all other industries.

## Our Project Goals

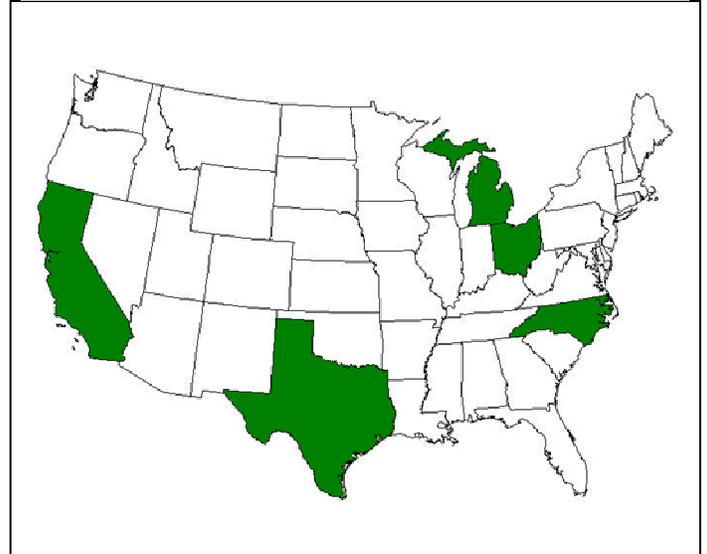
- Document the level of child labor in agriculture in California, Ohio, North Carolina, Michigan and Texas
- Educate the public and leaders at the local and national level about the conditions under which these children labor
- Build grassroots and national support for policies and programs that help keep underage farmworker children out of the fields and in school



When asked if he would like the average American to know anything about farmworkers, Jonathan (age 13) responded:

**"How these people suffer."**

## Children in the Fields Campaign Launch States



## What You Can Do

We must act now to ensure farmworker children are being afforded the same protection as other children.

- Educate others about the plight of farmworker children
- Support educational programs for farmworker children
- Advocate to close the loophole that allows young children to work in agriculture
- Support fair living wages for all farmworkers



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