

**HOUSING FOR FAMILIES
AND UNACCOMPANIED
MIGRANT FARMWORKERS**

HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

**HOUSING FOR FAMILIES AND
UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT FARMWORKERS**

Housing Assistance Council

1997

\$4.00

August 1997

Housing Assistance Council
1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Suite 606
Washington, DC 20005
202-842-8600 (voice)
202-347-3441 (fax)
hac@ruralhome.org (e-mail)
<http://www.ruralhome.org> (world wide web)

ISBN 1-58064-005-2

This report was prepared by Norma C. Lòpez and Nancy Legato of the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). Ndeye Jackson of the Office of Policy Development and Research at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) served as the Government Technical Representative. The work that provided the basis for this report was supported by funding under Cooperative Agreement H-5971 CA with HUD. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. HAC is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government.

The authors would like to thank the farmworkers whose willing and kind assistance made the completion of this report possible and the individuals dedicating their time to creating housing opportunities for disadvantaged populations.

HAC, founded in 1971, is a nonprofit corporation which supports the development of rural low-income housing nationwide. HAC provides technical housing services, seed money loans from a revolving fund, housing program and policy assistance, research and demonstration projects, and training and information services.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Migrant Farmworker Data	3
Housing Need and Availability	4
Methodology	6
Field Research Results	7
Case Studies	10
Accomack County, Virginia	10
Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps	12
Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing	13
Conclusions	14
South Central Wisconsin	17
Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps	20
Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing	22
Conclusions	23
Washington County, Oregon	25
Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps	28
Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing	29
Conclusions	30
Technological Solutions	33
Conclusions	35
Recommendations	38
Bibliography	43
Appendices	
Appendix A. Additional Migrant Farmworker Data	
Appendix B. Use of Inspected Buildings by Farmworkers	
Appendix C. Migrant Streams	
Appendix D. Sample of Housing Violations in Wisconsin	
Appendix E. State of Wisconsin Required Work Agreement	

INTRODUCTION

Every year, migrant farmworkers uproot themselves and sometimes their families to travel hundreds of miles in search of work. Usually the compensation they receive for their hard labor is inadequate. Farmworkers are one of the poorest working groups in the United States. Not only do they lack sufficient pay, they also lack other necessities, such as health care, transportation, adequate education and decent housing.¹

Migrant farmworkers' housing situations are different from those of nonmigrant populations. Traditionally, farmers provided shelter in farm labor camps, but the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)² in 1994 and 1995 found that only 32 percent of farmworkers lived in employer-provided housing on or off the farm.³ This means that approximately 67 percent of all farmworkers lived off the farm (property not owned/administered by the employer).⁴ Workers and their families are forced to seek shelter in multiple locations during the year, usually in small communities with very little rental housing available. Compounding the workers' difficulty, low prevailing wage rates and limited days of employment have resulted in two-thirds of migrants living below the poverty line. For them, most housing is unaffordable. As a result, many of them experience very poor housing conditions, including dilapidated structures, overcrowding, and homelessness.

Migrant farmworkers travel unaccompanied⁵ or with their families. Under both circumstances, they must cope with the lack of adequate housing. It appears that unaccompanied workers experience poor housing quality even more often than do migrant families; however, many farmworkers and advocates feel that it is easier for unaccompanied farmworkers to withstand substandard housing conditions. In addition, it is known that farmworker housing programs tend to focus on the needs of families.

¹Commission on Security and Cooperation With Europe, *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Washington, DC: 1993), p. 367.

²Since 1989, the National Agricultural Workers Survey samples close to 2,500 farmworkers every year. Although it does not focus on migrant farmworkers, it does produce information on migrant farmworkers employed in all crops. It is undertaken annually by the Department of Labor and is the most complete and current national survey of farmworkers. It is important to remember that this is only a sample and not an official count.

³For purposes of this report, the term “camp” refers to grower-provided farm labor housing on or off the farm, while “project” refers to farm labor housing developed by nonprofits.

⁴Unpublished combined data for 1994-1995 from the NAWS. August 1995.

⁵Unaccompanied in this report means traveling without family members, regardless of marital status.

This report examines the need and availability of housing suitable for family and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers and examines whether resources for housing unaccompanied migrant workers are adequate. Lack of data on the housing needs of families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers compelled the Housing Assistance Council (HAC) to study their needs through case studies. The case studies provide a migrant farmworker perspective on the issues examined in this report.

MIGRANT FARMWORKER DATA

Statistical data on farmworkers is controversial and scarce. For example, there is no universally accepted estimate of the number of farmworkers. However, it is known that Census data substantially undercount farmworkers.⁶ Estimates of farmworkers range from a low of 759,669, according to the Census, to a high of 4.1 million (including dependents), according to the Department of Health and Human Services.⁷ The more generally accepted number, however, is provided by the Commission on Agricultural Workers, which estimated 2.5 million farmworkers in its 1993 report.⁸

According to NAWS, migrant farmworkers made up a significant part of the farm labor population from 1989 through 1991. Forty-two percent of the farm labor force consisted of migrant farmworkers. Four out of five migrant farmworkers were men. Fifty-eight percent of migrants in the NAWS samples from 1989 through 1991 were married, but only about 40 percent traveled with their families while doing agricultural labor. NAWS estimated the number of migrant farmworkers at 670,000, using the 2.5 million benchmark. It also estimated that 410,000 dependents of migrants lived in the U.S., 340,000 of whom were children under the age of 14. The number of migrant farmworkers and dependents totaled 1,080,000.⁹

⁶La Cooperativa Campesina de California found that living in substandard, illegal, and crowded dwellings leads to Census omission. Undercount of farmworkers by the Census can also be attributed to factors such as failure of the Census to count people in irregular household arrangements (this includes extended families and more than one family sharing a housing unit) accurately, residential mobility (this is extremely relevant to migrant farmworkers), fear of government and outsiders, and little or no knowledge of the English language, among others.

⁷Migrant Health Program, *An Atlas of State Profiles Which Estimate Number of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and Members of Their Families* (Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Care Delivery and Assistance, Migrant Health Branch, 1990).

⁸The Commission on Agricultural Workers was authorized in 1986 by the Immigration Reform and Control Act to study the effects of the Act on the agricultural industry. Commission on Agricultural Workers, *Report of the Commission on Agricultural Workers, November 1992* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

⁹U.S. Department of Labor, *Migrant Farmworkers: Pursuing Security in an Unstable Labor Market* (Washington, DC: 1994). Also, see Appendix A for other important statistical data published in this report.

HOUSING NEED AND AVAILABILITY¹⁰

Ample anecdotal documentation exists about the conditions of housing available to migrant farmworkers; much of it shows the overcrowded conditions and structural deterioration in which many of them live. However, no current national data exists on the need for farmworker housing. The most recent data on the subject was produced by an unpublished report commissioned by the Farmers Home Administration in the late 1970s. The report calculated that 756,196 units were needed to meet the demand for migrant farmworker housing nationwide. Almost two decades later, that report remains the most comprehensive assessment of farmworker housing needs in the country. No indication exists that fewer units are presently needed.

The need is also shown by the demand for Rural Development (formerly known as Farmers Home Administration and, more recently, Rural Economic and Community Development) programs. The only program at the national level that provides funds specifically for farmworker housing is the Section 514/516 loans and grants program, administered by Rural Housing Service (RHS), an agency of Rural Development in the United States Department of Agriculture. The housing built under this program provides safe, decent, affordable shelter to farmworkers. However, the demand for these funds greatly exceeds supply. In 1995, requests for farm labor housing loans and grants totaled \$205,068,018 to provide 4,128 units. However, the appropriation in 1995 was \$26,161,432, enough to fund only 550 units. The demand is nearly eight times the supply. For FY 1997, Congress has appropriated only \$15 million for Section 514 loans and collapsed approximately \$6 million of funding for Section 516 grants into the Rural Housing Assistance Program (RHAP), a block-granted amalgam of Section 516, Section 504 repair grants, Section 533 housing preservation grants, and other programs. The division of funding between Section 514 and Section 516 will make it difficult for individual states to accumulate and combine enough funding for farm labor housing projects. The collapsing of several programs into one RHAP which will be blockgranted to the states will also make the included programs even more vulnerable to future budget cuts.¹¹

Very little is known about the availability of housing for families and unaccompanied workers as separate groups. Again, the Farmers Home Administration report provides the most recent data. It found that inspected houses, cabins, or duplexes (detached single-family), multi-unit residential buildings, and mobile homes were more likely to be occupied exclusively by families, rather than by unaccompanied workers. Only dormitories and barns were more likely to be occupied exclusively by unaccompanied migrant farmworkers. (See Table 1.) The study

¹⁰For a more detailed report on the housing needs of farmworkers see the Housing Assistance Council's report, *Fitting the Pieces Together: An Examination of Data Sources Related to Farmworker Housing* (Washington, DC: 1996).

¹¹Art Collings, "Complexities and Impact: Rural Housing Appropriations for FY 1997," *Rural Voices* (Washington, DC: Housing Assistance Council, Winter, 1996).

provided no information on the appropriateness of various housing structures for families and unaccompanied workers.¹²

Table 1
Building Type vs. Actual Use of Inspected Residential Camp Buildings¹³

Type of Building	% Family Use	% Unrelated Individual Use	% Family & Unrelated Individual Use
House, Cabin, or Duplex	77	20	3
Multi-Unit Residential Building	74	19	7
Dormitory	24	62	14
Mobile Home	68	31	1
Barn	35	59	6

Availability of subsidized housing to migrant farmworkers is limited as well. NAWS reports that all farmworkers are underserved by government public assistance programs of any type. Even though the poverty rate among migrant farmworkers is approximately 67 percent, less than 5 percent of farmworker households use housing subsidy programs.¹⁴ NAWS data does not provide information on housing subsidy usage by family or unaccompanied migrant workers; therefore, it is not known which group is less likely to receive this type of federal assistance.

¹²See Appendix B for more detail on the type of housing occupied by migrant and unaccompanied farmworkers by region.

¹³InterAmerica Research Associates, Inc., *National Farmworker Housing Study: Study of Housing for Migrant and Settled Farmworkers* (unpublished report prepared for the Farmers Home Administration) (Rosslyn, VA: InterAmerica Research, 1980).

¹⁴U.S. Department of Labor, Presentation to the Interagency Committee on Migrants on the findings of the NAWS, *Recent Findings Relevant to Policy Development and Program Planning and Evaluation* (Washington, DC: 1995), p. 16.

METHODOLOGY

HAC staff researched background information, traveled to sites in three states, and spoke with farmworkers, nonprofit housing developers, housing managers, public agencies and other service providers. The case study sites were selected according to (1) location, (2) a large number of migrant farmworkers, (3) availability of local contacts, and (4) availability of appropriate and successful housing projects for both families and unaccompanied workers. Each of the case study sites is located within one of the major migration streams traveled by migrant farmworkers every year.¹⁵

HAC staff contacted key nonprofit organizations in the three selected case study sites. All three nonprofit organizations had developed farmworker housing and were extremely knowledgeable about farmworker needs in their area. They provided staff or contacts, who took or directed HAC researchers to labor camps, nonprofit-developed housing, and sometimes private rental housing. Housing units visited included dormitories, houses, cabins, apartments, and mobile homes. Regional contacts were asked to take HAC staff to family, mixed, and single housing facilities ranging from "bad" to "excellent" conditions in order to observe and compare housing situations of families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers. Contacts interpreted these terms at their own discretion. In all cases, HAC staff concurred with their housing assessments. No exact measures or technical assessments of the housing conditions were made.¹⁶

The tables included in this report provide a glimpse of the situation of farmworkers and their housing situation on a very personal level. The information reported in these tables was obtained through one-on-one conversations and is not based on formal interviews. All information about farmworkers was obtained at farm labor camps. Crewleaders were contacted for permission to enter farm labor camps whenever it was deemed necessary by the regional contacts. The observations made by HAC staff are purely subjective.

¹⁵See Appendix C for map of migration patterns.

¹⁶For an example of a more technical assessment of farmworker housing conditions see the *Oregon Farm Labor Housing Survey* prepared by CASA of Oregon.

FIELD RESEARCH RESULTS

HAC research found that for migrant families and unaccompanied farmworkers, the most convenient and desired situation is employer-provided housing. According to conversations with farmworkers and advocates and observations during site visits, farmworkers who had been working the longest, with a few exceptions, seemed to have a set pattern of employment every year. Most often, the more experienced farmworkers who were contracted prior to traveling also had secured employer-provided housing, free or at a reduced rate. Most contracted workers were home-based migrants.

Conditions of employer-provided camps varied widely. Some camps were brand new and met all housing and sanitary codes admirably, while others rivaled housing in underdeveloped countries. Regardless of the condition of the housing, workers agreed that they would rather live in unsanitary, inadequate camps than have no housing at all or pay extremely high rents (the choice really does not exist for many of them). One grower in Wisconsin who replaced old with brand new housing described how migrant farmworkers begged company employees to let them stay in the old on-site housing, which was in deplorable condition. Migrant farmworkers did this because of the lack of housing near their work.

Farm labor camp living arrangements fit into one of three categories: families, singles (unaccompanied men only), and a combination of unaccompanied workers and families (mixed). The nonprofit-provided housing visited was occupied mostly by families; however, one project in Maryland rented to both unaccompanied men and families. One project in Wisconsin also rented to both unaccompanied men and women, but only because it served as emergency shelter for migrant farmworkers; tenants usually did not remain for a long period of time.

Most farmworkers do not have a choice about the type of housing they will occupy in a farm labor camp; nevertheless, farmworkers did express preferences for living in mixed or homogeneous housing. Some men and women traveling with their families complained about excessive drinking and noise by unaccompanied men. Women had no other objections to living in a housing facility along with unaccompanied men. Men, however, had varied opinions. Some unaccompanied men preferred living in mixed housing because they felt a sense of community. Others disliked it because they felt that husbands were too jealous or sometimes families were too concerned about unaccompanied men being in the same facilities with their children. About half of the farmworkers did not oppose living in mixed camps. Most housing managers and crewleaders were wary of placing families and unaccompanied men in the same facility or, in the mixed developments, even in contiguous units.

The perception among growers, housing managers, crewleaders and farmworkers was that unaccompanied men can withstand the lack of housing better than families with children. Among the developments observed for this research, most grower-provided housing for unaccompanied men was in poorer condition than that provided for families. Housing for unaccompanied men also lacked indoor kitchens and bathrooms more often. One grower said that it was important to provide individual kitchens in family housing. He said individual

bathrooms were not provided for every unit because this would increase construction costs. Nonprofit developers noted that housing with indoor kitchens and bathrooms was equally appropriate for both families and unaccompanied workers.

Both families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers expressed great discomfort about sharing small housing units with strangers. Some men expressed concern for families living in small units without central kitchens and bathrooms. Families stated that central kitchens and bathrooms were inadequate to meet their needs because they could not look after the children in common areas as well as they could in their own units. The reaction to inappropriate housing was a feeling of extreme discomfort for both families and unaccompanied farmworkers.

All regional contacts indicated that farmworkers lucky enough to obtain grower-provided or subsidized housing fared well enough to survive modestly. Others who were not so lucky spent a large portion of their earnings on housing, and often the quality was extremely poor. Nonprofit developers and other service providers also agreed that for migrant farmworkers finding housing in the rental market was a challenge, especially when they were new to the area. Migrant farmworkers face constraints such as excessive rent, substantial deposit amounts, long-term leases, lack of credit and prejudice. Those with larger families are even more disadvantaged. Frequently, large groups share a dwelling to reduce the high cost of housing, resulting in overcrowding. Often farmworkers live in overcrowded and substandard housing that does not meet many state and local housing codes.¹⁷ In all case study sites, contacts agreed that housing need was a serious problem.

All the nonprofit organizations contacted for this study had developed farmworker housing to try to meet the needs of migrant farmworkers. However, they had been successful in developing only a small number of units in comparison to the existing needs. Many nonprofits faced enormous constraints in developing farmworker housing. The greatest obstacle cited by nonprofit representatives was packaging financially viable deals with the low incomes and short occupancy periods of migrant farmworkers. The nonprofit organizations stated that it would be almost impossible to develop farmworker housing projects without Rural Development funds. Repeatedly, the nonprofit developers stated that lack of funds available for farm labor housing projects was one of the major obstacles. Other constraints included difficulties in finding land, zoning laws prohibiting multifamily projects, opposition of communities to farm labor housing (NIMBY),¹⁸ lack of infrastructure (public water and sewer), and lack of nonprofit capacity. In the face of these constraints, many nonprofits and local governments are unwilling to sponsor

¹⁷See Appendix D for a sample of housing deemed inadequate by the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations in the state of Wisconsin.

¹⁸Not in my backyard. Refer to HAC's publication, *Overcoming Exclusion in Rural Communities: NIMBY Case Studies* (Washington, DC: 1994) for a detailed account of a NIMBY struggle related to farmworker housing. That report gives details about individual projects only and does not focus exclusively on farmworker housing.

farm labor housing projects. Even within the network of low-income housing developers, there are only a few organizations that choose to develop farmworker housing.

According to nonprofit developers and farmworker housing advocates, Section 514/516 farm labor housing units have been allocated disproportionately to year-round farmworkers. The most common strategy among nonprofits has been to reserve some units in farm labor housing for migrant farmworkers, with the bulk of the units remaining for year-round farmworkers. Many times even these subsidized housing units have been unavailable to migrant farmworkers because many of them have not been in place long enough to get to the top of the long waiting lists of the programs offered by USDA and HUD.¹⁹

¹⁹One nonprofit-sponsored farmworker project in Hillsboro, Oregon, has a waiting list of 160 families.

CASE STUDIES

Accomack County, Virginia

Accomack County is located in the lower Delmarva Peninsula and is part of Virginia's Eastern Shore, which is composed of Accomack and Northampton counties. The agricultural industry in Accomack County contributes heavily to the area's economy. The most valuable crops consist of vegetables and fruits, including cucumbers, green peas, snap beans, squash, sweet corn, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and watermelons. In 1987, the total value of crops harvested for the Virginia Eastern Shore region was \$58.1 million.²⁰ In previous years, agricultural work was performed predominantly by African Americans and Haitians. At the time of this research was conducted, however, there had been a shift in the agricultural labor force. Delmarva Rural Ministries estimates that about 5,000 migrant farmworkers come to the area, about 90 percent of whom were Hispanic. Interestingly, the Virginia Eastern Shore has also experienced an influx of Guatemalan indigenous workers. Many Guatemalan workers do not speak English or Spanish, making the provision of services more complicated for outreach personnel. The other 10 percent is a mixture of Haitian and African-American workers.

As in other parts of the country, migrant farmworkers in Accomack County are a very poor group. According to a 1995 market analysis, the average annual income is \$5,692 for migrant workers and \$5,835 for seasonal workers. They are employed only 34 weeks per year.²¹ According to an outreach worker, many farmworkers work 12-13 hours per day during the peak season to earn \$200 per week.

Great need for farmworker housing exists along the Virginia Eastern Shore, according to social service providers, outreach workers and farmworkers. Verbal accounts indicate that finding housing in Virginia's Eastern Shore is no easy task. Unless a farmworker has been contracted with a promise of housing or comes early enough in the season, the housing search can be arduous.

However, finding vacancies is not the only problem. Migrants in Accomack County face the same problems faced by other farmworkers throughout the country when seeking temporary rental units in the private market. They must spend a high percentage of their income for housing. In Accomack County, the median gross rent amount is \$335²² which represents more than 70 percent of a migrant farmworker's income. Landlords require a deposit which often is beyond the farmworker's means. Furthermore, many landlords will not rent unless a one-year or

²⁰E. Sills, J. Alwang, and P. Driscoll, *The Economic Impact of Migrant Farmworkers on Virginia's Eastern Shore* (Blacksburg, VA: 1993), p. 4.

²¹NCALL Research, *Northampton County Market Analysis* (Dover, DE: 1995).

²²U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1990 Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3C* (Washington, DC: 1993).

six-month lease is signed. Many farmworkers experience discrimination and prejudice based on race/ethnicity and national origin from landlords. Finally, the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor Research Fund, Inc. (NCALL Research) reports that farmworkers are exposed to price gouging by unscrupulous landlords.

According to a market analysis done by NCALL Research, during the peak season in the Virginia Eastern Shore, there are only enough approved labor camp units to house two-thirds of the 5,000 farmworkers in the area. Approximately 1,700 migrant farmworkers must find alternative housing. The 1990 Census found that there are 3,187 vacant units in Accomack County. However, according to NCALL Research, many units are abandoned farm houses that have fallen into disrepair, and most vacant housing would be classified as uninhabitable. Additionally, housing categorized as vacant includes homes for sale and recreational facilities.

Despite the economic value of the farmworkers' labor, the community perceives them as a burden.²³ In fact, the opposite is true. An impact study conducted by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute's Department of Agricultural Economics College of Agriculture and Life Sciences found that migrants have a tremendously positive economic impact on the Virginia Eastern Shore. The study found that withdrawal of migrants from the area would lower employee income by \$6.4 million, and that 398 full-time jobs would be lost for Eastern Shore residents.²⁴ The study explored various scenarios that included the total withdrawal or replacement of migrant farmworkers. All alternative scenarios resulted in lower economic gain for the county.

The State of Virginia does realize the value of farmworkers, but has not spent many dollars to solve the housing problem. In 1989, a state-funded program called the Migrant Housing Program appropriated about \$700,000 for fiscal year 1990 to fund construction and rehabilitation of migrant farmworker housing. However, budget constraints limited the program to one year only.²⁵ The state's Consolidated Plan for 1994 to 1995 recognized the need for adequate and affordable housing for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and planned for the addition of housing for farmworkers over a period of five years.²⁶

²³Sills et al., p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., executive summary.

²⁵Housing Assistance Council, *Who Will House Farmworkers: An Update on State and Federal Programs* (Washington, DC: 1992), p. 4.

²⁶NCALL Research, *Northampton County Market Analysis* (Dover, DE: 1995).

Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps

The Virginia Eastern Shore has 106 recognized farm labor camps that are inspected by the Accomack/Northampton County Health Department.²⁷ Of these 106 camps, HAC staff visited two. To gain access to the camps, HAC staff enlisted the assistance of an outreach worker from Delmarva Rural Ministries. The outreach worker was asked to take HAC staff to camps ranging from "excellent" to "bad" conditions.

Table 2 highlights the conditions of the two camps visited and provides information on the farmworkers themselves. The average age of farmworkers was about 35 years. Homebases varied from Mexico to Florida and Texas. Traveling times varied from three to eight months and expected absences from homebases ranged from six to nine months. The vast majority of the workers had more than one job between the time they left their homebase and the end of July.

All of the workers had employer-provided housing for the duration of their stay in Accomack County. Farmworkers living in grower-provided camps had been brought to the area under contract with the grower, and therefore did not face the same housing search issues confronted by farmworkers without such a contract. However, all did indicate that the first time they arrived in the area finding housing was very difficult. One unaccompanied man indicated that he would not bring his family with him even if better housing was available because his stay in Accomack County was too brief, and moving the children from one school to another would disrupt their studies. The following sections will describe the two camps individually and the housing conditions for families and unaccompanied workers (for more details, see Table 2). (The camps will be referred to as "Camp A" and "Camp B." This technique will continue throughout the report.)

Camp A provides migrant farmworkers with the same type of units whether they travel with their families or are unaccompanied. The units consist of two small bedrooms, one bathroom, and a common area where the kitchen and a small dining table are located. For unaccompanied workers, bedrooms have four beds and house four persons. In the case of farmworker families, the most usual occurrence was two or more families sharing a unit, with each family assigned a bedroom. Family combinations included but were not limited to a mother and daughter; a husband, wife and two children; and a mother and two children. The number of people, whether families or unaccompanied, in one room ranged from two to four.

Camp B consists of dormitory style rooms for both families and unaccompanied farmworkers. Unfortunately, HAC researchers were able to observe only the rooms housing unaccompanied men. These rooms are large enough for narrow bunk beds and house four men. The common

²⁷The Virginia Eastern Shore has 106 farm labor camps; of those, 84 are located in Accomack County. The Accomack/Northampton Health Department is in charge of camp inspections. Four health department employees are directed to inspect the camps every two weeks, but try to do it weekly to detect problems immediately. They enforce the State of Virginia's Office of Health Protection and Environmental Management codes, which has adopted the federal farm labor housing code.

area kitchen facilities and showers are separate from the sleeping units. The kitchen facilities are spacious and seem to be in good condition. Separate showers are provided for men and women; both are moldy and dirty. Only portable toilets are provided. One man expressed concern with the appropriateness of this type of housing for families. He worried that the kitchen facilities, the showers and the portable toilets were too far removed from the sleeping units for families traveling with children. He thought this was an especially unfortunate situation at night time when it was cold, and the children had to leave the living quarters to use the toilets.

The housing conditions in these two labor camps were rated as some of the best in the county by the outreach worker guiding HAC staff. It did appear that the conditions in these camps overall were acceptable. However, other camps in the area which HAC staff were unable to visit, but observed from the outside, appeared to be extremely dilapidated. Although the housing labor camps visited complied with federal and state codes, there was nothing luxurious or even particularly comfortable about these units. The average density in the two camps visited was 3.22 persons per room, more than three times the standard of one person per room used by the Census Bureau and HUD to indicate crowding. Frequently, the migrant farmworkers, whether with their families or unaccompanied, shared the housing with unrelated individuals. Some of the descriptions of the overcrowding situation were "uncomfortable," "no privacy," and "no room to rest."

Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing

Delmarva Rural Ministries attempts to meet the needs of migrant farmworkers in the region. At the time this research was conducted, nonprofit farmworker housing had not been developed yet in the Eastern Shore of Virginia. According to Delmarva Rural Ministries, strong NIMBY sentiments and a lack of infrastructure make it very difficult to develop farmworker housing in this area. Delmarva Rural Ministries was in the beginning stages of a development project in Northampton County. One of the greatest obstacles has been finding the land. It took three years to locate an appropriate site.

However, Delmarva Rural Ministries had already completed a farmworker housing project in nearby Maryland.²⁸ Completed in 1989, it is a 34-unit project developed and owned by Delmarva Rural Ministries in cooperation with technical assistance received from NCALL Research. Like other nonprofits, Delmarva Rural Ministries sets aside a pre-determined number of units for migrant farmworkers. Eighteen units are reserved for year-round farmworkers; the remaining 16 units are set aside for migrant farmworkers.

Although it does not have a preference to house workers traveling unaccompanied or with families, Delmarva Rural Ministries has found that there is higher demand for housing from migrant farmworkers traveling with their families. However, the demand is still high for both

²⁸Although the project is not located in the Virginia Eastern Shore, it is included here because it is a model of farmworker housing facilities and management.

groups. According to the property manager at the project, the physical design of the units is appropriate for families and unaccompanied workers. A three-bedroom unit with a common area, kitchen, and bathroom can house a family of six or six unrelated adults comfortably. Taking into account that often the length of migrant farmworkers' occupancy period is unknown, the project offers leases on a monthly and weekly basis.

This project is exemplary because it rents to both unaccompanied workers and families, achieving an unusual level of community between individual farmworkers and farmworkers with families. However, the property manager stated that minor problems still occur. For example, people sometimes do not know how to operate appliances in the apartments or equipment in the common areas. Another problem that the property manager encountered at first, especially with the unaccompanied workers, was that they would send all the money they earned to their permanent homes without setting aside money to pay the rent. However, these problems are not insurmountable. According to the manager, the key to maintaining a successful farm labor complex with a significant number of migrant farmworkers is to provide education on simple procedures that most people take for granted, like how to operate a washer or dryer, or how to budget the weekly income so that enough is left to pay rent and take care of needs here after sending money back home. She stated that in order to maintain a well-managed site, she must often inform the workers on a one-by-one basis about the expectations and responsibilities they incur when signing a lease. Based on the comments made by the nonprofit developer and observations made by HAC staff, the management company has done an excellent job of providing a site manager who has found the balance between strictness and understanding and sensitivity to the issues of farmworkers.

Another important aspect of the project's success is the property management company's ability to create a sense of community by providing organized activities for the tenants such as soccer games and cookouts. Playground and soccer equipment are provided. This simple recreational equipment plays a significant part in fostering a community atmosphere and in entertaining the tenants. The tenants' needs are considered. For example, it was known that many tenants were afraid of the police. To promote better understanding of the Hispanic culture and better relations with the police, the property management company organized a cookout and invited the neighborhood officers.

According to the nonprofit developer, the property manager and the farmworkers, the project has proved to be an enormous success. Tenants were eager to show HAC researchers the housing and stated that they liked living in the project because the housing was clean and affordable and a sense of community was felt. Delmarva Rural Ministries has now completed an additional farmworker housing project in Delaware and plans to start a new one in Northampton County, in the Virginia Eastern Shore. Given the level of success experienced with the Salisbury development, both new projects will be operated and managed in the same manner.

Conclusions

According to Delmarva Rural Ministries and NCALL Research staff, the availability of affordable housing for year-round and migrant farmworkers in the Virginia Eastern Shore is very limited. In addition, the housing conditions for migrant farmworkers are very poor. Visits to two camps, conversations with farmworkers, outreach workers and observations of dilapidated housing confirm these statements.

It is apparent that the lack of affordable housing does not really provide migrant farmworkers with the option to live in the housing of their choice. This may explain in part why families and unaccompanied workers live in dormitory style housing, even though it appears that this is an uncomfortable situation, especially for families. Based on conversations with farmworkers, it appears that their primary concern is to secure shelter they can afford. Other considerations such as the location of the kitchen or bathroom facilities, and whether their neighbors are families or unaccompanied workers, are secondary. Nonprofit-developed housing units are multifamily projects, which include one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom units with indoor kitchens and bathrooms; they may accommodate families or unrelated individuals. According to Delmarva Rural Ministries, these units are appropriate for both types of tenants.

It is significant to note that no Rural Development housing existed in the Virginia Eastern Shore at the time this research was conducted. As a result, both families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers relied completely on grower-provided and private rental market housing.

(Table 2 appears in its entirety on the following page.)

Table 2
Samples of Grower-Provided Housing in Accomack County, VA

	Camp A Mixed	Camp B Mixed
homebase	Mexico, Texas	Mexico, Florida
time traveling (as of 7/ 1995)	3-4 months	3-8 months
expected return to homebase	December	October
expected time away from homebase	8-9 months	6 months
jobs held since leaving homebase	1-3	2-3
type of housing	room in camp	room in camp
distance from work	5 minutes walking	1 hour
# of persons in housing	8-9	4
# of bedrooms	3	1 room
sharing rooms with family only?	no	no
plumbing available	yes	yes, in common areas
kitchen available	yes	yes, in common areas
heating available	no	no
rent amount	\$7 weekly per person	\$5-\$10 weekly
family traveling with farmworker	mixed	mixed
observer's comments	Housing seems adequate, but too small for the number of families in a single unit; bathrooms in bad condition, kitchen old.	Sleeping quarters in fairly good condition; only portable toilets available; common kitchen is somewhat removed; laundry facilities not available.

South Central Wisconsin

Most of the agricultural activity in Wisconsin takes place in the South Central part of the state in the counties of Dodge, Waushara, Green Lake, Outagamie, Columbia, Jefferson, Dane and Marquette. As do most other states, Wisconsin relies on migrant farmworkers to do the labor-intensive seasonal work required by the agricultural industry. According to estimates from United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), between 8,000 and 10,000 migrant farmworkers and family members come every year to work in Wisconsin's canneries and fields between the months of March and December. More than 90 percent of the migrant farmworkers in Wisconsin come from Texas. UMOS staff estimates that approximately 95 percent of migrant farmworkers are Hispanic. Crops farmed by migrant workers include Christmas trees, apples, peas, sweet corn, cucumbers, onions, spinach, celery and other vegetables.

Estimates of migrant farmworker median income in Wisconsin are between \$6,000 and \$9,000 per year. This is well below the \$29,442 median annual income for the state of Wisconsin.²⁹ A family of five wanting to rent a three-bedroom apartment would have to pay approximately \$635 a month.³⁰ This amount represents 83 to 125 percent of a migrant farmworker family's income, well beyond the 30 percent federal guideline. Affordability is clearly a great problem in these migrant-dependent counties.

Another problem in the region is housing availability. According to a report on the housing opportunities in the Beaver Dam area, rural markets seem to have a low year-round demand for housing, and any available opportunities cater to a regional population that changes little over time.³¹ Farmworkers not housed in farm labor camps face tremendous challenges when looking for housing in the private market. Most places in Wisconsin require a one-year lease, which most farmworkers are unable to sign. Landlords require a deposit that is often equivalent to the first month's rent. If farmworkers lack transportation they are limited to searching for housing in places close to work. They face prejudice by landlords because of their race and national origin and because of the size of the family or group.³² Finally, they lack knowledge of housing opportunities because most housing in rural areas is not advertised and information about availability is passed through word of mouth.³³ It is not unusual to find accounts of farmworker arrests when they sleep in parks or reports of farmworkers living in cars, barns, or caves.

²⁹V. Hernandez-Gantes and A. Nieri, *Evaluation of Housing Opportunities Around the Beaver Dam Area* (Madison, WI: 1994), p. ii.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²A UMOS employee in the Beaver Dam, Wisconsin office reported that many families complained about landlords openly stating they would not rent to Hispanics.

³³Hernandez-Gantes and Nieri, p. ii.

This situation is especially true for migrant farmworkers who travel to Wisconsin unsolicited in the hope of finding work. "Freelance" workers have the most difficult time because they are looking for housing and employment simultaneously.

In Wisconsin, however, migrant farmworkers are better protected by state laws than in most other states. The Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (DILHR) plays an active role in enforcing and implementing all laws that pertain to farmworkers. The Department has a variety of progressive employment laws. For example, a contractor is required to register and to obtain a certificate of registration from DIHLR. State law requires a certified contractor to carry the permit and exhibit it to any person with whom he or she plans to deal as a contractor prior to doing so.

Even more unusual is the law that says that a written work agreement must exist between the worker and the employer. The written agreement is a contract signed by the employee and the employer at the time of hiring, and must contain the following:

- a guarantee of a minimum of 45 hours of work in a two-week period;
- a statement of the place of employment, kind of work available, applicable wage rates, pay period, approximate hours of employment including overtime applicable, term of employment including approximate beginning and ending dates, kind of housing and any charges in connection with it, cost of meals if provided by the employer and any other charges or deductions from wages beyond those required by law; and
- a guarantee that the wages together with the other terms and conditions of employment are not less favorable than those provided by the employer for local workers for similar work.³⁴

Wisconsin also has in place an unusual farm labor housing code which is enforced by DIHLR. Every farm labor camp must be registered with the state and follow the requirements to maintain it in good standing. As of January 1, 1996, changes to the farm labor housing code passed by the Wisconsin legislature became completely applicable to farm labor camps throughout the state. The new regulations include more square footage per person and a minimum of seven-foot-high ceilings. The new rules no longer allow privies or portable toilets; they require mechanical or automatic washers; they require a sink with hot and cold running water in every unit with cooking equipment; pesticides may never be stored in a housing area; and every building must have permanent heating equipment that can maintain the temperature at 70 degrees.

Farm labor housing is inspected by four DIHLR employees who divide the camps by region. DIHLR inspectors are responsible for enforcing the housing code and the migrant labor laws. In total, the four inspectors are responsible for more than 100 camps and for approximately 4,500

³⁴See Appendix E for a sample of the Wisconsin State work agreement form.

workers. One inspector stated that she was responsible for covering 24 camps and approximately 1,800 workers in five counties. Inspectors are clearly under great stress to cover as much area as possible, especially during the peak agricultural season.

The establishment of the Migrant Housing Task Force is a positive step towards solving the lack of affordable migrant farmworker housing. The Task Force was created in the fall of 1994 by the Migrant Labor Council to articulate how the lack of housing is a barrier to the agricultural industry. The Task Force discovered through a survey sent out to 170 growers that, of the housing now provided by growers, 78.5 percent is for singles and 21.5 percent is for families. Even more useful is the finding that presently at least 348 additional units are needed to meet the demand for seasonal housing. Of those units needed, 260 are for unaccompanied workers and 88 for families. The Task Force is now in the process of working on a strategic plan to be presented to the Migrant Labor Council, which is a legally appointed Council of the state legislature and has the authority to make recommendations to DILHR on migrant issues. The major piece in the strategic plan is to add units to the housing stock through efforts undertaken by cooperative migrant, private, nonprofit and government initiatives. The main goal of the strategic plan is to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for migrants in the State of Wisconsin. To accomplish this, the Task Force is studying the feasibility of establishing a state farm labor housing tax credit. It is also investigating ways to work with the Wisconsin Manufacturing Association and with the farming industry.

Another factor contributing to the welfare of farmworkers in Wisconsin is the existence of United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc. (UMOS). UMOS is a statewide nonprofit organization providing services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, Hispanics and other low-income minority populations throughout the state of Wisconsin. UMOS provides a comprehensive range of services including employment, education, training, health promotion, disease prevention and other social services. It is the only nonprofit organization in the state that incorporates serving the migrant population in its mission. As the only organization serving this population, UMOS is in an advantageous position because it can gather valuable data on the health, housing and educational needs of farmworkers. Additionally, there is no competition for dollars with organizations providing similar services. More importantly, farmworkers have access to different types of services and information from any of the eight UMOS locations throughout the state without the fragmentation that results from having various service providers. Furthermore, as a statewide organization, it is able to coordinate its advocacy efforts effectively on behalf of farmworkers at a local and statewide level.

One major dilemma that all those concerned with the welfare of farmworkers must face is this: whether to allow farmworkers to continue living in substandard, unsanitary and overcrowded conditions or to report housing code violators at the risk that the housing will be shut down and the farmworkers will have nowhere to go. UMOS' position is that it will pursue and cooperate in any investigation that will enforce the state and county housing codes. Their policy, succinctly put, is "some housing -- no one should have to live in."

In Wautoma, Wisconsin, this policy was implemented. A trailer park slum in which about half the tenants were farmworkers was officially shut down. This was accomplished after a UMOS employee contacted the local authorities on behalf of farmworkers who had complained about the housing. They had reported conditions of filth, violations of the state's plumbing and electrical codes, missing doors and windows and cockroaches. There was a report of children becoming ill because cockroaches had crawled into their nose and ear cavities. The owner of the property was directed by DILHR to cease renting the units, without success. The trailer park closed down only temporarily. This occurrence led to the harassment of the UMOS employee who had carried out the complaint. She was threatened and physically shoved by farmworkers desperate for housing. They blamed her for their displacement. A few months later the trailer park was again open, and UMOS staff was hesitant to become involved directly by filing a complaint. The UMOS legal counsel, the county's district attorney, and the DIHLR general counsel cooperated to shut it down. This is an example of the complexity of the dilemma that many nonprofits, government agencies, and other concerned individuals encounter when deciding whether to take action against inadequate housing.

Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps

Wisconsin has over 100 registered labor camps which are inspected by DIHLR. HAC staff visited five grower-provided farm labor camps and one nonprofit-provided camp. To gain access to camps in Dodge, Columbia, Waushara, and Green Lake Counties, HAC staff enlisted the assistance of outreach workers from UMOS. The outreach workers were asked to take HAC staff to camps ranging from "excellent" to "bad" conditions.

Table 3 highlights the conditions of six of the seven camps visited and provides information on the farmworkers there.³⁵ As in Virginia, homebases for farmworkers included Florida, Texas, and Mexico. One farmworker did not have a permanent homebase. The average age was 33 years. Traveling times varied from one month to 12 years, and expected absences from homebases ranged from four to eight months. According to those interviewed, female farmworkers are more likely to travel with their families than are male farmworkers. Some men feel that they cannot bring their wives because they are not legal residents, but would bring them otherwise. Most farmworkers expected to have from one to four jobs during the year. Some did not work but traveled with their families, and some were still looking for work.

All the farmworkers in the grower-provided housing said it was easy to find housing because they had a contract which included housing. One farmworker in the grower-provided housing, however, said that the first year she came to Wisconsin was extremely difficult because she and her family did not know where to look. In subsequent years, it became easier. In contrast to the workers in the grower-provided housing, the farmworkers at a nonprofit-sponsored emergency shelter center for migrant farmworkers said finding housing was extremely difficult for them

³⁵Camp E in Dodge County, Wisconsin, was briefly visited but no farmworker information was available. While conditions of the camp are described below, Camp E is not included in the table.

because they were new to the area. The following sections will describe the camps individually and the housing conditions for families and unaccompanied workers at each of these locations (for more details see Table 3).

Camp D was privately financed by the grower corporation. It provides 32 units of family housing for 110 persons, and is one of the best farm labor housing facilities observed by HAC staff during the course of this research. It is clean, comfortable, and new. The corporation's human resources manager guided HAC researchers through the project and expressed satisfaction at being able to provide good quality housing for the migrant farmworkers. The housing is free of charge. This project houses families only. The grower indicated that there was a need for family housing in the area, and that they wished they could provide more because a waiting list exists for unaccompanied migrant farmworkers who would like to bring their families. The cost of another, similar project would be approximately \$1 million; the grower cannot afford it presently. However, the manager stressed that, in Wisconsin, providing quality housing was key to attracting the best workers.

According to UMOS, this camp is an example of one of the growers making a significant effort to supply housing for its employees. In addition to the family units mentioned above, the grower provides some scattered units for families and is exploring other possibilities, like rehabilitating an old farm owned by the company. It also provides housing to unaccompanied workers at a different site (Camp E). HAC researchers were unable to tour these facilities extensively. However, the housing facilities for the unaccompanied migrant farmworkers resemble a hangar filled with what seem to be endless rows of bunk beds. No privacy exists whatsoever, except for the makeshift curtains the farmworkers have created with sheets. HAC researchers observed that the grower's quality of family housing is much higher than that for unaccompanied workers. It is clear that the grower's priority at the moment is to provide quality housing for families. However, it is also important to note that until two years ago, the quality of housing for families working for this grower was very poor. When asked why they had not mixed unaccompanied workers with families, the management responded that they thought there would be too many problems housing the two groups in the same facilities.

Camp F houses both families and unaccompanied workers, 153 adults and 66 children. The crewleader guided HAC staff through the camp which consists of trailers and two-room apartments. The apartments are reserved for families and the trailers for unaccompanied workers. According to the crewleader, the family apartments are more spacious. From the outside they appeared to be in better condition than the trailers. The family apartments consist of two bedrooms, a tiny kitchen and dining area. The apartments are extremely small and need minor repairs. Bathrooms are outside in common areas. The crewleader in this camp said that in the month of July three families had come looking for housing, but he had none and so had turned them away.

Camps G and H consist of mixed housing. Although the structures of the housing are in only mild disrepair, overcrowding continues to be an issue. At Camp G, 13 people share one unit. At

Camp H, three families share a three-bedroom apartment. Like Camp F, these sites are in acceptable physical condition.

Camp I is one of the worst camps observed by HAC researchers. Eleven unaccompanied men live in a four-bedroom house provided by the grower at no cost to the farmworkers. Although the house has a spacious kitchen and living room, it is extremely dilapidated. The kitchen is dirty; the ceiling, walls and floors have cracks; the paint on the exterior of the house is peeling. One of the men in the house prefers to sleep in his car because he said his car is more comfortable, but uses the bathroom and kitchen. When questioned about his preference for living in mixed or singles camps, this man said he prefers living in a singles camp, even though he loves children, because families are too vigilant of their children sometimes. He added that it really does not make a difference where single men live because if they lack housing it is much easier for the unaccompanied men to sleep wherever it is necessary. For a family, he said, this would be more difficult. This type of sympathy for families is prevalent among many of the unaccompanied men who spoke with HAC staff.

Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing

UMOS is actively involved in developing housing solutions. When this research was conducted, negotiations were taking place to obtain Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for land acquisition. UMOS staff was also exploring the possibility of acquiring a camp to renovate it. UMOS has also produced one farmworker housing project, hereafter referred to as Project J. These 32 units of farmworker housing are used as emergency shelter for migrant farmworkers. The housing consists of two-bedroom units with kitchens and dining areas; the 16 newest units also have bathrooms. Laundry facilities exist and a UMOS service office providing social services and job referrals is on site. Project J houses unaccompanied men and families. However, the majority of the tenants are families.

To alleviate the need for temporary housing in emergency situations, UMOS has resorted to leasing motel units. Using a grant from Pillsbury Corporation, UMOS leased ten motel rooms for the entire month of July. The hotel units do not have cooking facilities, can only accommodate up to four persons in a two-bedroom unit, and are more costly over the long term than other housing; however, they provide an alternative to homelessness. This is one solution (albeit temporary and limited) that UMOS staff has employed to attack the farmworker housing problem in Wisconsin.

Conclusions

The seven sites visited in South Central Wisconsin vary widely in quality. Differences in the housing conditions vary for camps that house unaccompanied farmworkers or families. Camp D (grower-sponsored family housing) and Project J (nonprofit-sponsored mixed housing) provide excellent living conditions. Camps F, G, and H, all of which mix family and unaccompanied farmworker housing, are in acceptable physical condition, although overcrowding persists. Camp E for singles, like Camp I, provides extremely poor housing facilities for unaccompanied farmworkers. Although the survey sent out to growers by the Migrant Housing Task Force estimates that more housing units are needed by unaccompanied workers, there appears to be more perceived demand for family housing.

Based on field research observations and conversations with growers, housing managers, UMOS staff, and farmworkers, the conditions of farmworker housing and well-being in Wisconsin vary widely. For the most part, however, farmworkers in Wisconsin fare better than other farmworkers in the other case study sites visited. This appears to be a result of the state employment and housing migrant laws, the existence of UMOS and the relatively low numbers of farmworkers entering the state every year. It is apparent that cooperation between government agencies, growers and UMOS also plays a large role in solving the problems faced by migrant farmworkers who come to harvest Wisconsin's crops.

Table 3
Samples of Grower- and Nonprofit-Sponsored Housing in South Central Wisconsin

	Camp D Families	Camp F Mixed	Camp G Mixed	Camp H Mixed	Camp I Singles	Project J Mixed
homebase	Texas	Texas	Texas	Mexico	none, Florida	Texas
time traveling (as of 7/1995)	2 months	1 month	2 months	4 months	2 months - 13 years	3 months
expected return to homebase	October - November	October - December	December	December	n/a - December	October
expected time away from homebase	5-6 months	4-6 months	7 months	8 months	n/a - 7 months	7 months
jobs held since leaving homebase	1	1	n/a	n/a	1-4	n/a
type of housing	apartment in camp	apartment in farm labor camp	apartment in labor camp	apartment in camp	house	apartment in farm labor project
distance from work	2 miles	2 blocks	4 miles	4 miles	3-4 miles	n/a
# of persons in housing	4-6	5-6	13	three families	11	5

	Camp D Families	Camp F Mixed	Camp G Mixed	Camp H Mixed	Camp I Singles	Project J Mixed
# of bedrooms	1-2	2	yes	3	4	2
sharing rooms with family only	yes	some	no	no	some	yes
plumbing available	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
kitchen available	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
heating available	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
rent amount	\$0	\$9/two weeks	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$41.35/two weeks
family traveling with farmworker	yes	some	yes	yes	no	yes
observer's comments	One of the best grower-provided farmworker housing camps seen; new, clean; excellent common bathrooms and areas; units seem small but comfortable; ample laundry facilities; new housing replaced old; grower developed housing without gov't funds to avoid bureaucracy.	Camp in adequate condition; it has a lot of open space and equipment for children to play in; electric fence inside camp seems dangerous for children; torn screen on doors; common bathrooms could use cleaning, but otherwise seem to be in good condition.	n/a	Three-room apartment shared by three families; some repairs needed; housing seems passable, but rooms seem too small for three families.	Large house for single men provided by grower; house is dilapidated; needs many repairs; dirty; no laundry facilities.	Safe, affordable, clean. Tenants receive housing plus social services provided by UMOS staff. Well-kept facilities; playground for children.

Washington County, Oregon

The agricultural industry attracts 8,000 migrant farmworkers to Washington County each year, in addition to seasonal and year-round farmworkers; the number of farmworkers with their dependents climbs to more than 18,000 in the peak season.³⁶ The vast majority of farmworkers in Washington County are Mexican-American, Mexican, and Guatemalan; a large portion immigrate from Oaxaca and Southern Mexico. According to verbal accounts from health care providers at the Virginia Garcia Health Clinic, migrant farmworkers in the area speak 11 other languages and dialects besides Spanish.

Washington County's economy is heavily agricultural. The annual gross farm sales total nearly \$500 million.³⁷ Labor intensive crops account for 75 percent of the annual gross farm sales. Farmworkers work in the county's nurseries, canneries and fields. The primary labor intensive crops are strawberries, red raspberries, black raspberries, Evergreen and Marion blackberries, boysenberries, blueberries, grapes, cucumbers, potatoes, and Christmas trees. In Washington County the crop season lasts from four to six months. However, increasing numbers of farmworkers are staying longer periods because they have been able to piece together different seasonal jobs into a longer employment period. For example, one worker traced his employment pattern from February to November. He first works in a nursery. He then moves to work in the fields picking strawberries. When the strawberry season is over he works in a cannery for a short time. Then he goes back to the fields to pick grapes. Finally, he works with Christmas trees until the beginning of November and then returns home. His work year lasts approximately ten months. This increase in the work period is attributed to the booming grape and Christmas tree industry.

The housing needs of the farmworkers in Washington County are indeed serious. A great number of farmworkers live in unsanitary, unsafe, and overcrowded conditions, whether in labor camps or in private units. However, the most visible problems occur in farm labor camps. Some of the most common code violations found in camps include lack of hot and cold water, lack of clean water, sewage disposal problems, unsafe or faulty electrical wiring, and severe overcrowding.³⁸

Affordability is an enormous problem. The annual income of a year-round farmworker family is \$10,500 -- about one fourth of the county's median household income. The average gross rent in

³⁶Housing Development Corporation, brochure (Hillsboro, OR: 1995).

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Housing Development Corporation, Washington County Farmworker Housing Needs Assessment (Hillsboro, OR: 1993), p. 10.

the county is \$624 for a two-bedroom apartment.³⁹ The average farmworker family would have to contribute more than 70 percent of its income towards rent, far more than the federal guideline of 30 percent. Some farmworkers take this option, but often are unable to move into privately owned units because of other major obstacles. Migrant families cannot afford to raise the deposit required by landlords, which is usually equal to the first month's rent. Another obstacle is that landlords require a lease. Obviously, migrant farmworkers are not in a position to sign 12-month leases.

The local response to the housing crisis of farmworkers has not been overwhelmingly positive. The Washington County Department of Housing Services which administers HOME, CDBG and other funds has awarded some money to the Housing Development Corporation of Washington County to help defray the cost of hiring an executive director. It has also specifically recognized the housing needs of farmworkers in the Housing and Community Development Plan which lays out the county's plan of action until the year 2000.⁴⁰ However, the County of Washington's share of allocated funds are clearly not enough to meet the housing and community needs of all the groups that it must serve. The county's 1995 entitlement grants totaled \$3,986,000. The estimated dollars to address housing and community development needs for Washington County total \$882,686,000.⁴¹

Of six nonprofit housing developers in the county, only one attempts to meet the specific housing needs of farmworkers. The Housing Development Corporation of Washington County (HDC) is a 13-year-old nonprofit organization that develops, manages and owns farmworker housing in Washington County. In cooperation with CASA of Oregon, a regional technical assistance provider, HDC has developed 91 units of affordable housing. However, only 24 of those are earmarked for migrant farmworkers. At one point the board was split over the mission of the organization. The dilemma was whether to provide only migrant farmworker housing or to serve all farmworkers. The board decided to serve all farmworkers since no organization really meets the needs of any type of farmworker in Washington County. HDC decided to offer a range of services including a homeownership program for those who qualify.

Remarkably, for twelve and a half years, HDC operated without paid staff. The work was performed by the volunteer board. However, the board decided that to pursue housing development more aggressively, staff was needed. Six months after HDC hired its first executive director, the move had already proved beneficial. The executive director served as an

³⁹Housing and Community Development Plan, Washington County, Oregon City of Beaverton, July 1, 1995 - June 30, 2000.

⁴⁰The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires all local government agencies receiving housing and community development federal funds to produce a consolidated plan for all their housing and community development initiatives.

⁴¹Housing and Community Development Plan, Washington County, Oregon City of Beaverton, July 1, 1995 - June 30, 2000, p. 50.

advocate and liaison to government agencies, foundations, and the public. After six months, HDC had received funding for the executive director's position for the next three years and for an outreach worker.

At the time this research was conducted, HDC was in the pre-planning stages of its next project. It intended to acquire Campo Azul, a farm labor camp with some of the worst conditions in Washington County. If HDC is successful in acquiring the site and securing funds from Rural Development, it will provide 60 units of housing for migrant farmworkers. However, the complete development process could range from three to seven years or more.

Even if HDC is successful in acquiring and renovating this camp, the lack of farmworker housing in Washington County will still be overwhelming. According to a housing needs assessment conducted by HDC, only 610 units of on-farm housing provided by the growers exist. An additional 1,825 units must be provided to house migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Year-round and local seasonal workers need another 1,114 units. The total shortfall is 2,684 units of farmworker housing in Washington County.

In Washington County farmworkers cannot expect to have their needs met by subsidized housing. In 1993, there were 3,132 families on the Housing Authority's waiting list. This translates to a waiting period ranging from two to four years. Migrant farmworkers are especially not well served by public housing and Section 8 programs, since their stay in one place is temporary. Almost all of the housing units provided by HDC have been developed using Rural Development Section 514/516 funds. The housing is clean, affordable, and safe. Unfortunately, it is insufficient to meet the farmworker housing demand. As mentioned earlier, of the 91 units owned and managed by HDC, only 24 are earmarked for migrant farmworkers.

A useful instrument for nonprofit organizations developing farmworker housing is CASA of Oregon. CASA of Oregon is a nonprofit organization specializing in farmworker housing. This organization provides general technical assistance and in-depth development assistance to community development corporations, growers and public agencies; provides information on innovative building techniques as well as state housing resources; does home ownership counseling; and owns, manages and coordinates social services for several properties.⁴² According to HDC staff, CASA of Oregon has been essential in providing technical assistance for the farmworker housing it has developed.

One unique aspect of developing farm labor housing in Oregon is the existence of a housing tax credit for farm labor housing. The Oregon Farmworker Housing State Income Tax Credit was developed in 1989 for the purpose of increasing farmworker housing development. According to CASA of Oregon staff, it has had a great impact. Reportedly, the most attractive feature of the program is that it is simple to use. Until the end of 1995, the sponsor of a tax credit project

⁴² Housing Assistance Council, *Who Will House Farmworkers: An Update on State and Federal Programs* (Washington, DC: 1992), p. 10.

could claim up to 50 percent of the cost of construction or rehabilitation on the state income tax form simply by checking the appropriate box, keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.

In 1995, however, the legislature passed a bill that reduces the available tax credit from 50 to 30 percent. It also establishes an application process to apply for the tax credit; applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis until the annual limit of \$3.3 million is depleted.

Grower-Provided Farm Labor Camps

The county has 31 recognized farm labor camps that must be registered with the state of Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OR-OSHA). Of these 31 camps, HAC staff visited six. To gain access to the camps, HAC staff enlisted the assistance of outreach workers from the Centro Cultural of Washington County, a nonprofit organization which promotes understanding of the farmworker population and provides social services. The outreach worker was asked to take HAC staff to camps ranging from "excellent" to "bad" conditions. In response to this request, he stated that no excellent grower-provided farm labor camps existed in Washington County.

Table 4 highlights the conditions of the six camps visited and provides information on the farmworkers there. Homebases are as distant as Mexico and even Guatemala. One farmworker based in California was originally from Oaxaca, Mexico. The average age was about 35 years. Traveling times varied from three to 38 months and expected absences from homebases ranged from three to 48 months. Some farmworkers had already worked at one other job by the end of July.

In Washington County, as mentioned earlier, affordability is a major crisis. However, three of the six grower-provided labor camps visited provide housing completely free of charge. Although this housing is free of charge, often farmworkers pay a high price by living in housing conditions rivaling those of underdeveloped countries. In Washington County those who can move into a farm labor camp consider themselves very fortunate. The following sections will describe three camps and the housing conditions for families and unaccompanied workers at each of these locations (for more details see Table 4).

Camp K houses unaccompanied workers in very tiny one-room units. The outside appearance of this camp seemed acceptable; however, the inside of the units was extremely dark, dirty, and dilapidated. These units lack kitchens, bathrooms, electricity and water. Four men sleep in one room. When asked about the overcrowding in the room, one man responded that indeed it was overcrowded, but that he was lucky to share this housing with only three other people. He described one instance where 11 people shared a one-room trailer. He told HAC staff researchers that the last person to come in for the night would usually have to sleep by the door steps because the trailer was so crowded. This unaccompanied worker said that he would definitely bring his family if better housing were available. He stated, however, that it was extremely hard to "make it" here in the U.S. for a man traveling on his own, and that it would be even more difficult with a family. Another unaccompanied man in this camp stated his

preference for mixed housing. He thought that in mixed housing there was a more defined sense of community and respect. However, he said he really did not have a choice about where to live because the housing at Camp K is provided free of charge and that opportunity is too good to forego.

Camp L was the best camp observed in Washington County. However, the conditions were not excellent. The apartments consist of two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a small dining area. A farmworker at this location informed HAC staff that it was easy for her family to find housing because her father knew the crewleader; therefore, the family has guaranteed housing every year. This unit was also occupied by six related individuals. The fact that only one family lived in a unit was an unusual occurrence in all the camps visited by HAC staff. Usually units were occupied by more than one family.

Camp M houses both families and unaccompanied workers. It is among the worst housing observed throughout the course of this research. It consists of unattractive dilapidated small wooden cabins lacking kitchens, bathrooms, water, and electricity. The units lack windows and are very dark inside. The common area bathrooms reek. No laundry facilities exist in the premises. According to two residents, the water is not suitable for drinking. One farmworker said that he had to start buying water for cooking and drinking after he saw chunks of dirt coming out of the faucet and after his young daughter became ill. The units are overcrowded. Families and groups of between four and eight live in one room without partitions. Sixty units house more than 300 persons. Families living at the camp stated the rent is \$200 per cabin. Centro Cultural outreach workers and HDC stated that persons have stayed during the winter facing severe climate conditions without heat. Countless abandoned vehicles, where more farmworkers live, add to the unattractive and desolate appearance of the camp. One migrant family stated that they only stayed there because other housing was unavailable. This was the most affordable housing they could find. The head of household also stated that he felt uncomfortable living next to unaccompanied workers because he disliked to expose his family to their behavior. He refused to expand on this statement.

The housing conditions of farmworkers in grower-provided housing ranged from terrible to passing. The worst conditions were those of the men living in single camps and those found at Camp M. Overcrowding was a major problem in all the camps. For this small sample of camps, the average number of persons was 4.5 per room. When asked how they felt in overcrowded situations, the farmworkers' logical answers were "uncomfortable," "unable to do as you please," "not able to relax after a hard day's work."

Nonprofit Farm Labor Housing

As mentioned above, the only nonprofit developer attempting to meet the housing needs of farmworkers in Washington County is the Housing Development Corporation. In Washington County, nonprofits must face the same obstacles as other nonprofits in the rest of the country. However, Washington County developers face two specific constraints. The first one is finding the land. Agriculture is such an important industry in the county that much of the land where the

workers live and work is zoned exclusively for farm use. Use of the land for purposes other than agriculture is strictly restricted. As a result, finding an appropriate site can be an arduous process. The second constraint in Washington County is the rapidly increasing price of land. Washington County is one of the fastest growing counties in the region. With its growing population, the price of the land, according to HDC board members, has tripled in four years.

Conclusions

In Washington County 1,825 units are needed to meet the housing needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. No further data is available determining the specific number of units needed for families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers respectively. The research indicates that both families and unaccompanied workers suffer from the lack of affordable housing. It appears that housing conditions in grower-provided housing for unaccompanied workers are worse than those for families, except in Camp M. In the camps visited by HAC staff, unaccompanied men were more likely to be housed in units without indoor kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Table 4
Samples of Grower-Provider Housing in Washington County, Oregon

	Camp J Mixed	Camp K Singles	Camp L Mixed	Camp M Families	Camp N Singles	Camp O Families
homebase	Mexico	Mexico	California	Guatemala	Mexico	Mexico
time traveling (as of 7/1995)	4 months	2-5 months	3 months	38 months	4-6 months	4 months
expected return to homebase	November	September - December	end of July	1996, month undetermined	indefinite-November	October 1
expected time away from homebase	8 months	7 months	3 months	48 months	10 months	6 months
jobs held since leaving homebase	1	2	1	4	4-6	0, pregnant
type of housing	house	room in singles camp	cabin in mixed camp	room in camp	room in camp	two room apartment in camp
distance from work	scattered sites in town	1/4 - 1 mile, walking	n/a	20 minutes by bus	30 minutes by car	scattered sites
# of persons in housing	8	8	8	4	6	6
# of bedrooms	4	none--one big room with partition	none--one room cabin	none--one room	none--one room	2 small rooms
sharing rooms with family only	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
plumbing available	yes	yes	no, faucet outdoors	yes, in common area	no, faucet outdoors	yes
kitchen available	yes	yes	no	yes, in common area	no	yes
heating available	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes
rent amount	\$100 per month to cover utilities	\$0	\$200 per month	\$50 per month	\$0	\$0
family traveling with farmworker	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes

	Camp J Mixed	Camp K Singles	Camp L Mixed	Camp M Families	Camp N Singles	Camp O Families
observer's comments	Unusually spacious house for grower-provider housing; no apparent overcrowding problem; some repairs needed outside and inside the house; surrounded by seemingly substandard trailers.		One room cabin--severely overcrowded; no light, very dark even during the day; no electricity. Over 300 people live in 60 one-room units. Water faucet is outside; water is dirty; bathrooms outside, very unsanitary; many abandoned cars; dirty; desolate; no common kitchen; cabins lopsided. Should be shut down.	No laundry facilities; women kneel and wash by the faucet outside; spacious common kitchen; needs some repairs, but overall, one of the best seen so far.	Extremely overcrowded small room; flies swarming in the apartment incessantly; dirty; no septic system; workers must wash outside; transportation seems to be a big problem in this camp.	The best farm labor camp seen in Washington County; unit has a small dining area, a separate kitchen, a bathroom inside; clean and seems to need only minor repairs; somewhat overcrowded, one couple and two children live in one room.

TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

In light of the magnitude of the problem, it might seem logical to turn to technology for assistance. However, the data search conducted by HAC staff yielded no major findings on technological solutions to provide housing for migrant farmworkers. Nevertheless, certain innovations have been used in meeting the housing needs of migrant farmworkers. In Stemilt Hill, Washington, a grower won an exemption from the Washington State Board of Health to set up tents during the summer. The grower provided canvas tents anchored to concrete pads. Each tent was accompanied by an outdoor refrigerator, grill, water spigot, electrical outlet and table. The board granted this exemption to observe the results and only allowed the tents for three weeks during the summer when weather was relatively good. Exemptions like these are rare because of the health hazards associated with this type of temporary housing, like exposure to the elements. In this case, the tents were eventually blown away by strong winds.

In Green Lake County, Wisconsin, United Migrant Opportunity Services staff found ways to reduce development costs by implementing novel solutions. For example, because of lack of infrastructure, the septic system used in the project consists of holding tanks emptied every two months. For the summer months, to avoid the prohibitive costs of air conditioning, the project designers devised ceiling exhaust fans. Windows are left open and the fans operating; the fans suck up the hot air, leaving the unit cooler. The designers also used Kemply for wall paneling. Kemply is a durable material that is much less expensive than traditional wall paneling materials. This product is used in freezers, college dorms, mobile homes, and portable offices. Because many of the innovations in the UMOS project had never been tried before with Rural Development-funded housing, the project sponsors requested many exemptions from the regulations.

Another product that is now being examined, and has a potential role in providing affordable migrant farmworker housing, was invented by the United States Department of Agriculture. Originally named spaceboard, this material is a honeycombed building product that is currently in the market under the name Gridcore. The material is hollow but strong and is environmentally sound. It has the potential of replacing wood and does not use toxic materials in production. In addition, it would be less expensive than the traditional construction materials. Presently it is mainly used for stage sets, shelving and partitions. The product is not yet available for housing construction purposes because it has not passed building code requirements such as fire retardancy and water proofing. Gridcore Systems International Corporation expects to bring the product up to code in the future.

These examples of innovations and possible technological solutions are not exhaustive. However, as mentioned above, the data search conducted by HAC staff did not yield other information. Furthermore, nonprofits contacted by HAC staff during the course of this research were unaware of any other technological solutions. One nonprofit housing developer believed technological solutions could be effective in providing farmworker housing. However, these technological solutions consisted of innovations such as those used in Project J in Green Lake

County, Wisconsin, to cut down construction costs. No technological solutions for solving the lack of housing for families and unaccompanied workers as separate groups were found.

CONCLUSIONS

Migrant farmworkers travel hundreds of miles to work in fields, canneries, nurseries and processing plants to fill an obvious labor shortage in states such as Virginia, Wisconsin, and Oregon. The problem of insufficient farmworker housing is hidden behind the rolling hills of America's countryside. The need is clearly demonstrated in the previous case studies. Farmworkers cannot afford to secure housing in the traditional rental housing market as a result of low and sporadic incomes, brief occupancy periods (for migrants), and widespread discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity, national origin, and familial status. Additionally, increasing and improving the stock of low-income housing specifically designated for farm laborers is complicated by:

- ⊠ difficulty packaging financially viable projects to serve residents with especially low incomes and short occupancy periods;
- ⊠ lack of subsidized funds for farm labor housing projects;
- ⊠ difficulty finding and then securing land with appropriate zoning and access to utilities in agricultural areas;
- ⊠ community opposition to new construction of farm labor housing (NIMBYism); and
- ⊠ lack of water and sewer, access roads, and other utilities to available sites.

As a consequence of these conditions, some growers are not willing or able to provide housing, whereas others cannot or prefer not to deal with the charge of housing their workers. Nonprofits struggling with limited budgets and limited staff capacity are similarly reluctant to focus on farm labor housing, particularly for migrants. This is true even for experienced nonprofits, but some nonprofits, such as the Housing Development Corporation of Washington County, had existed only on a volunteer basis for many years before being able to hire full-time staff who could concentrate on the problem of farmworker housing.

To the extent that farmworker housing does exist, there are differences between the conditions of the housing related to whether the housing is targeted at year-round farmworkers or migrants, unaccompanied farmworkers or families. The case studies also indicate differences in quality and availability between nonprofit- and grower-sponsored housing.

Those growers providing housing do not offer their workers a choice in terms of single, mixed, or family housing because any housing is scarce, and often the main concern of both growers and migrant farmworkers is finding shelter regardless of the physical condition of the housing. While the housing need is clearly vast for both unaccompanied farmworkers and families, a perception exists among growers, nonprofits, and farmworkers themselves that unaccompanied men can withstand inadequate housing conditions better than families. Grower-provided housing for unaccompanied farmworkers is often in worse condition than that for families. Nonprofits tend to focus new housing projects on families. Finally, nonprofits are also likely to allocate a small portion of new units to migrants, but reserve the bulk of new projects for year-round workers in order to secure the project's rental income over longer periods. Farmworkers must take what they can get.

As mentioned previously, housing availability data for both families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers does not exist on a national level. Case studies such as those presented above provide a glimpse of the availability and affordability problem for both families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers, but are not conclusive enough to lead to recommendations about the level of resources to be allocated to each group. Although NAWS estimates that increasing numbers of migrant farmworkers travel unaccompanied, HAC research indicates that unaccompanied migrant farmworkers would like to travel with their families more often. Other regional questions also play a role in determining a sound strategy for providing farmworker housing. Are the numbers of migrant workers expected to continue to rise in a given area? Will the kinds of crops raised, and therefore the length of the harvest season, change in the future? Will more migrants “settle out” in this area and begin to use it as a homebase? Although it is abundantly clear that more decent and affordable farm labor housing is necessary, these considerations will lead local and regional growers, nonprofits, and government entities to determine the kind of housing necessary: single-room occupancy, single-family detached, dormitories, rental programs, homeownership programs.

States and localities often do not take responsibility for meeting the housing needs of migrant families and unaccompanied workers. Often, the only entities attempting to meet housing needs are nonprofit housing developers that face tremendous constraints in developing housing. Against great odds, nonprofit developers contribute to solving the migrant housing problem by piecing together many funding sources to develop farmworker housing. All farmworker nonprofit projects visited had one funding source in common: Rural Development's 514/516 program. The nonprofit developers asserted that without this funding source, providing affordable housing for this extremely poor population would be almost impossible.

Some states have found that farm labor is essential to their agricultural industries and have taken steps to create housing opportunities.⁴³ Oregon has created a state farmworker housing tax credit that gives growers an incentive to provide farmworker housing. Budget constraints have led the legislature to reduce Oregon's farmworker housing tax credit from 50 to 30 percent at the beginning of 1996. Wisconsin is also in the process of finding solutions to the farmworker housing need. It has established a Migrant Housing Task Force that is examining the feasibility of establishing a farmworker tax credit program and other ways to provide affordable farmworker housing. Unfortunately, not enough is being done to find a solution. Site visits to three states and personal communication with agencies and individuals knowledgeable about local housing needs confirm that the problem can be overwhelming.

Often, behind decent and affordable housing there are years of struggle for the nonprofit and interested individuals. However, for nonprofits that choose to develop farmworker housing, the efforts are worthwhile and the results are impressive. Section 514/516 housing is clean, decent, safe, and affordable. Excellent farmworker housing, although not abundant, does exist thanks to

⁴³See HAC's publication, *Who Will House Farmworkers: An Update on State and Federal Programs*, for more detail on state actions.

committed individuals, responsible growers, nonprofit organizations and responsive government agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the different housing needs of unaccompanied farmworkers and those traveling with their families, the following set of actions is recommended.

- ⊞ *Further research should be conducted with the different housing needs of migrant families and unaccompanied farmworkers in mind.* These case studies indicate that the housing needs of migrant families and unaccompanied workers are different, and that workers might make different choices about traveling with their families if better housing were available. The extent and variety of the need are not known, however, because no current, comprehensive national data exists. The Department of Labor and NAWS already conduct some research into farmworker populations. HUD and USDA should help sponsor and take into consideration the result of research into housing needs in particular areas when determining how and where to sponsor farmworker housing. Some migrant health clinic organizations have collected sporadic data on farm labor housing conditions. The Housing Assistance Council has begun to devise a comprehensive format for such data collection and will be working with farmworker advocate organizations to gather the information on a consistent, regional basis. Financial resources from HUD and USDA would provide much-needed support for this work and help extend it throughout the country.
- ⊞ *Based on the results of further research, government-sponsored programs should encourage development of housing for unaccompanied farmworkers and families in proportion to the relative need. The different needs of families and unaccompanied workers should be considered when approving plans for dormitories, multi-bedroom apartments, and single-family housing.* This research, while not broad enough to determine relative need, does suggest that unaccompanied farmworkers are slightly more likely than are families to live in overcrowded, structurally deficient units. However, the study also indicates that growers, nonprofit organizations, and farmworkers themselves prioritize the needs of families over those of unaccompanied workers (and certainly some housing issues which affect health are more likely to impact children than non-elderly adults). Structurally, different types of units may be more appropriate for different types of migrant groups. Multi-bedroom units in multifamily complexes and single-family detached housing with at least semi-private kitchens and baths may be more important to farmworkers traveling with their families. Multi-bedroom apartments also serve unaccompanied farmworkers well, but developers wishing to focus specifically on unaccompanied farmworkers may find dormitory-style units just as serviceable and less costly to produce than apartments.
- ⊞ *Growers and nonprofits alike who consider providing farm labor housing should consider possible problems in mixing unaccompanied workers with families. Where mixed housing is provided, the project manager/sponsor should encourage community-building activities, such as cookouts and recreational sports.* Some farmworkers worry about exposing children to drinking or other problems among large groups of unaccompanied farmworkers. However, where social services and/or community-building activities are provided (as in Delmarva

Rural Ministries' Maryland project) relationships between families and unaccompanied workers seem relaxed.

While this research indicates some distinctions between unaccompanied farmworkers and families, its most decisive conclusion is that the farmworker housing stock in general must be preserved in good condition and expanded. Therefore, the following recommendations reflect the needs of both families and unaccompanied migrant farmworkers, based on observations of the case study sites.

- ⊞ *Increase funding for Rural Development Section 514/516 programs.* The case studies indicate that, even when growers and nonprofits are interested in providing such housing, the economic realities of the land and housing markets make it difficult to build farmworker housing at market financing rates. The funding sources for increasing the nonprofit farm labor housing stock are few and increasingly underfunded, however. Rural Development's Section 514/516 programs have been the single most effective enabler of the development of affordable and decent farmworker housing. Funding for these programs is budgeted for FY 1997 at \$26.5 million inclusively, a 6 percent overall increase from the FY 1996 appropriation. However, the 1995 obligation of \$56.3 million clearly represented a stronger commitment -- at least financially -- to meeting the vast housing needs of farmworkers.
- ⊞ *Set aside some HOME and CDBG funds on a national level for farm labor housing demonstration projects.* Some nonprofits and local governments have found HOME and CDBG funds useful in providing gap financing to Section 514/516-financed projects and enabling water/sewer access and roads to farm labor housing sites.⁴⁴ Even for states with farmworker housing included in their Consolidated Plans, a national set-aside will make it less likely that farmworker needs are obscured by other special needs populations.
- ⊞ *Encourage state and local housing authorities to earmark Section 8 rental assistance for farm labor housing.* As observed by housing developers in these case studies, farmworkers who must seek private rental housing often cannot afford the necessary rent levels. Even the development of nonprofit-sponsored farm labor housing is impeded by difficulty projecting high enough rental income to leverage development financing.
- ⊞ *Encourage states and localities to highlight and focus on meeting the needs of farmworkers in their Consolidated Plans.* States with agriculturally-based economies and high farmworker populations do not always recognize the importance of farm labor to their economies. Some states have included farmworkers as a "Special Needs Population" in their Consolidated Plans and have targeted this group for housing subsidy in this way.
- ⊞ *Encourage state-sponsored innovations to provide incentives for growers to increase and improve farm labor housing.* According to farmworkers, grower-provided housing is

⁴⁴See the Housing Assistance Council's *HOME, CDBG, and Farmworker Housing Development*, Washington, DC (forthcoming).

generally preferable to finding units in the private rental market. Grower-provided housing is more likely to be accessible to farmworkers' job sites, and growers often provide housing at little or no cost to the farmworker. As noted in the case studies, some states have provided a state-level tax credit for farmworker rental housing investors. Such a tax credit is marketable to both nonprofit and grower sponsors of affordable housing for farmworkers.

- △ *Increase capacity of local organizations serving farmworkers to increase the supply of affordable housing.* Based on the camps observed and conversations with farmworker advocates, nonprofit-sponsored housing is often in better condition than that provided by growers. Yet many nonprofits lack full-time staff and/or familiarity with housing finance, particularly for affordable farm labor housing. Technical assistance and program outreach should be targeted to farmworker housing providers.
- △ *Encourage state and local governments to increase high-density residential zoning in rural areas with agricultural economies to accommodate farmworker multifamily housing projects.* Rural areas, particularly in agricultural regions, usually have zoning laws that do not permit many multifamily housing complexes. Housing providers in Maryland and Washington mentioned zoning restrictions as one significant barrier to developing more farm labor housing. Zoning is also a prime vehicle used by NIMBY opponents to obstruct farm labor housing.
- △ *Allow experimentation with alternative building materials and other creative solutions for cost-cutting purposes with Rural Development- and HUD-funded projects.* As shown in these case studies, developers often need to use imaginative construction methods to keep development costs down without decreasing the long-term viability and safety of the units.
- △ *Raise awareness among public officials and the general public about the situation of farmworkers. Increase cooperation and coordination among all levels of government, nonprofits and the private sector to assess and address the need for farmworker housing. Expand outreach efforts to increase use of all federal and state housing programs by farmworkers.* The case studies and background data demonstrate that obstacles to developing farm labor housing are diverse, ranging from the most local (zoning laws, NIMBYism, and land costs) to state level (limited funds for affordable housing) to nationwide (widespread discrimination against farmworkers based on familial status, national origin, and race/ethnicity). The living conditions of farmworkers observed throughout the case study sites highlight and confirm overwhelming need for social services and access to housing assistance by farmworkers. Yet data from NAWS indicates that farmworkers do not use public assistance in proportion to their need. Testimony from advocates and farmworkers themselves also indicates that discrimination is an additional barrier to adequate housing. At a minimum, farmworker access to federal and state programs should include increased efforts by fair housing offices to educate farmworkers about their rights and improve farmworker access to the fair housing violation complaint and resolution process. The Department of Justice should employ its testing and investigation procedures to target examples of pattern or practice discrimination on behalf of farmworkers. With coalition work, nonprofits, growers

and government agencies can mitigate these problems. Wisconsin's farm labor laws provide an excellent model for other states seeking to improve the situation and self-sufficiency of farmworkers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Commission on Agricultural Workers. *Report of the Commission on Agricultural Workers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.
- Commission on Security and Cooperation With Europe. *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993.
- Delmarva Rural Ministries. Personal Communication. July 1995.
- Gridcore Systems International Corporation. Personal Communication. July 1995.
- Hernandez-Gantes, V. and Nieri, A. 1994. *Enumeration of Housing Opportunities Around the Beaver Dam Area*. (Prepared for United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc.) Madison, WI: 1994.
- Housing Assistance Council. *Fitting the Pieces Together: An Examination of Data Sources Related to Farmworker Housing*. Washington, DC: Housing Assistance Council, 1996.
- Housing Assistance Council. *Who Will House Farmworkers?: An Update on State and Federal Programs*. Washington, DC: Housing Assistance Council, 1992.
- Housing Development Corporation of Washington County. Personal Communication. July 1995.
- Housing Development Corporation of Washington County. Brochure. Hillsboro, OR: 1995.
- Housing Development Corporation of Washington County. *Washington County Farmworker Housing Needs Assessment*. Hillsboro, OR.
- La Cooperative Campesina de California. *Out in the Cold: Causes and Consequences of Missing Farmworkers in the 1990 Census*. Sacramento, CA: La Cooperative Campesina de California, 1991.
- NCALL Research, Inc. *Northampton County, Virginia Farm Labor Housing Market Analysis*. (Prepared for Delmarva Rural Ministries.) Dover, DE: NCALL Research, 1995.
- "Noble Does as Noble Does: Gridcore's Robert Noble has Major Designs on Helping the World." *San Diego Business Journal*. June 7, 1993. Volume 14, p. 8. San Diego, CA.
- Sills, O., Alwang, J. and Driscoll, P. *The Economic Impact of Migrant Farmworkers on Virginia's Eastern Shore*. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Department of Agricultural Economics, 1993.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3C*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1993.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics. *Migrant Farmworkers: Pursuing Security in an Unstable Labor Market*. (Based on findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), Research Report No. 5.) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics, 1994.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics. *U.S. Farmworkers in the Post-IRCA Period*. (Based on findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), Research Report No. 4.) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics, 1993.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics. *The National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS): Recent Findings Relevant to Policy Development and Program Planning and Evaluation*. (Presentation to the Interagency Committee on Migrants.) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Program Economics, 1995.

Washington County. *Housing and Community Development Plan, July 1, 1995 - June 30, 2000*. Hillsboro, OR: Washington County, 1995.

APPENDICES

Additional Migrant Farmworker Data⁴⁵

Racial and Ethnic Background

- In 1991, 74 percent of migrant farmworkers had legal authorization to work in the United States;
- 82 percent of migrant farmworkers from 1989 through 1991 were men;⁴⁶
- seven out of ten migrant farmworkers were Mexican men;⁴⁷
- 85 percent of all migrant farmworkers were born abroad, the majority (90 percent) in Latin America;
- 10 percent of all migrant farmworkers are U.S.-born Hispanic;
- foreign-based migrants make up 30 percent of the farm labor force, 71 percent of the migrant labor force and represent 480,000 workers;
- U.S.-based migrants make up 12 percent of the farm labor force, 29 percent of the migrant labor force, and comprise an estimated 190,000 workers;
- areas such as the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast, in which the traditional farm labor force was predominantly white and African American, now rely almost exclusively on Latinos to perform seasonal agricultural work; and
- most vegetable, fruit and nut workers are migrants.

⁴⁵All information in this appendix, unless otherwise noted, is from *Migrant Farmworkers: Pursuing Security in an Unstable Labor Market*.

⁴⁶U.S. Department of Labor, *U.S. Farmworkers in the Post-IRCA Period* (Washington, DC: 1993), p. 13.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Poverty and Wages

- The median income for migrant farmworkers is \$5,000 per year;
- two-thirds of migrant farmworkers live below the poverty line as a result of lack of full-time and year-round work, combined with low wages;
- 73 percent of children of migrant farmworkers under the age of 14 residing in the U.S. live below the poverty line; and
- migrant farmworkers work an average of 29 weeks per year.⁴⁸

⁴⁸As reported by most of the farmworkers, they would like to find more work, but when the season is over they really have no choice but to return home unemployed.

ISBN 1-58064-005-2