

California is the top producer of agricultural products in the United States, and the fifth-largest producer in the world. Agriculture contributes \$60 billion to the state's economy, with dairy products as the top valued commodity.¹

There are nearly 900,000 farmworkers in California.² The largest numbers of farmworkers are in Kern, Monterey, Fresno, and Tulare counties.³

Congressional District 22, which includes parts of Kern, Kings, and Tulare counties, produces over \$7.5 billion worth of agricultural products from over 2000 farms, 86% of which are family farms.⁴ Tulare County is the top dairy producer in the United States.⁵

Agricultural workers are more likely than workers of any other industry to get their health care through Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program.⁶ According to a 2023 UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis, 36% of workers in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining are enrolled in Medi-Cal.⁷ However, this is likely an undercount due to data limitations. Many farms are small employers and work is often seasonal, so employer-sponsored or job-based health coverage is rare. In fact, Medi-Cal provides health coverage that, if provided by employers, would cost the agricultural industry in California over \$2.5B annually.⁸ Farmworkers are also not covered by many federal labor protections and, as a result, over one third of families with a farmworker live under the federal poverty level.⁹ Nearly three quarters live under 200% of the federal poverty level.¹⁰ Without Medi-Cal, farmworkers would likely have very little access to health care.

California's Farm Workers Feed the Nation



There are nearly
4 in 10
farm workers on Medi-Cal



powering an agriculture industry that contributes

\$60 billion
to the state economy

California's Farm Workers Depend on Medi-Cal

Medi-Cal provides health coverage that, if provided by employers, would cost the agricultural industry in California over

\$2.5 billion annually



“There will be no health care entity that won’t be affected.”

Gary Herbst

CEO, Kaweah Health Medical Center, Visalia



Medi-Cal Supports Farmworker Jobs



In a study in Ohio over half of Medicaid enrollees reported that having Medicaid made it easier for them to continue working, and in Michigan nearly

7 in 10

said they performed better at work once they got Medicaid coverage

Policy changes such as those being considered by Congress that require Medi-Cal members to report their work hours each month to keep their health care would have a devastating impact on farmworkers, and thereby on the operation of farms in California. Farmworkers often work for multiple employers seasonally, or work through farm labor contractors, and can be paid by piece rather than by hour making it challenging for them to obtain adequate documentation to keep their health care.

Medi-Cal coverage keeps workers employed. Research shows that without health care access, workers may skip needed services, and their health may deteriorate to the point that they are unable to work or must reduce their hours. Conversely, access to health care keeps individuals healthy enough to remain in the workforce, particularly for jobs that require physical labor. In a study in Ohio over half of Medicaid enrollees reported that having Medicaid made it easier for them to continue working, and in Michigan nearly seven in 10 said they performed better at work once they got Medicaid coverage.¹¹

Terminating health care access for farmworkers will cause a devastating ripple effect on Central Valley residents’ access to health care, regardless of their insurance. Hospitals and health care systems already facing financial struggle would be forced to close or reduce services, creating longer waits to see a doctor or get emergency care. In a Visalia Times Delta story, officials from Kaweah Health, Adventist Health, and Valley Children’s Hospital and Family Healthcare Network each warned that Medicaid cuts would result in widespread harm to health in the Valley, resulting in sicker people seeking care from hospitals. “There will be no health care entity that won’t be affected,” cautioned Kaweah CEO Gary Herbst.¹²

Cuts to Medicaid, including policy changes that impose bureaucratic paperwork requirements for access to health care, would have severe consequences for farmworkers as well as California’s agricultural industry.

¹ www.cdfa.ca.gov/Statistics.

² escholarship.org/uc/item/9p8710qt.

³ Ibid.

⁴ www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/Congressional_District_Profiles/cd0622.pdf.

⁵ tularecounty.ca.gov/board/news/news-2023/tulare-county-ag-1-in-the-nation-success-driven-by-dairy-innovation-higher-prices/.

⁶ www.chcf.org/publication/do-medi-cal-enrollees-work-policy-glance/.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Joel Diringer and Noe Paramo, “Medi-Cal is an Essential Resource for San Joaquin Valley

Farmworkers and a Substantial Benefit to the Agricultural Industry”, CRLA Foundation, April 2025.

⁹ la.cooperativa.org/31-california-farmworker-facts-you-should-know/.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-enrollees-and-work-requirements-lessons-from-the-tanf-experience/.

¹² www.visaliatimesdelta.com/story/news/2025/03/04/tulare-county-health-officials-say-medi-cal-cuts-could-close-hospitals/81161943007/.