Agriculture is a vital component of New York State’s economy and a significant source of employment across the state. The Agriculture Labor Program was formed in April of 2012 to serve the business and employment needs of the state’s farmers and farm workers. Our goal is to make sure that New York’s large and diverse agriculture industry thrives as it follows rules that protect worker rights and safety. Over ten (10) bilingual staff members are available across the state to provide information about Department of Labor services such as job search assistance, job posting and recruitment and other local resources and services. These Agriculture Labor Specialists can help connect job seekers with employment and training opportunities and help employers find reliable, qualified employees.

The Agriculture Labor Program provides this manual to serve as a convenient reference for Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) working in New York State. The manual contains important information regarding the process of registering as an FLC with the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The manual also contains general information about state and federal labor laws that pertain to Farm Labor Contractors and farm employers who use their services. These topics include housing, transportation, meal periods, pay notices, record-keeping and more and are discussed as a convenient reference. If you have questions about the topics addressed in this manual, or a specific issue related to your work, please contact the Agriculture Labor Program anytime at 1-877-466-9757, or by email at dipa@labor.ny.gov. If you would like assistance to register as an FLC, please contact Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist Caylin Gwise at 585-258-8855, or by email at Caylin.Gwise@labor.ny.gov.

NOTICE: This booklet is intended only as a guide and cannot replace Federal, State or Local Government Rules and Regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with new laws and regulations that may go into effect after publication of this manual or to seek an updated manual if one is available by contacting your local Agriculture Labor Specialist.

Who is a “Farm Labor Contractor”?  
Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) perform a unique and important role in the agricultural economy by recruiting, transporting, supplying, supervising or otherwise managing agricultural workers. Each year FLCs recruit and place thousands of migrant, seasonal and year-round workers on farms across New York and the United States. The NYSDOL and the USDOL have similar definitions for FLCs. Both definitions consider the specific activities that a person is paid to perform on behalf of an employer or land owner. Generally, any person or business who charges a fee to recruit, transport, supply or hire migrant or seasonal farm or food processing workers to work for, or under the direction, supervision, or control of a third person, is an FLC. A person who directs, supervises, or controls any part of the work of such workers for a fee, is also a FLC. In other words, if you supply and/or supervise a crew to do farm or food processing work for a farm owner or manager in New York State, you are an FLC and must register with the NYS Department of Labor. The following chart lists a few examples of farm and food processing work.
Table 1: Examples of Farm and Food Processing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Work</th>
<th>Food Processing Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planting, pruning, harvesting, spraying.</td>
<td>Washing, cleaning, sorting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tilling, cultivating, staking, tying, trimming,</td>
<td>grading, preparing, packing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weeding, thinning, chopping, digging.</td>
<td>cutting, pressing, drying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operating farm equipment, feeding animals.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Whether you operate your business as a sole proprietorship, a partnership (including LLPs), a cooperative, or a corporation (including LLCs), you must register as an FLC. Depending on your specific agreement with the farmer, state and federal law may view you as an employer, with employer responsibilities. You can, at the same time, be an employee under state and federal law. For example, if the employer did not pay you, you would be protected as an employee under the laws of New York State. You are required to ensure that all of the terms and conditions in the work agreement that an employee receives are kept. If the farm employer violates the agreement, it would be your responsibility to ensure the worker receives the agreed upon terms, wages, housing, or bonuses, for example. We will discuss many topics below, some of which are traditionally viewed as responsibilities of the farm employer. Keep in mind as you go through the manual of your responsibility as a “joint” employer of the workers.

Registering as a Farm Labor Contractor
An FLC working in NYS is required to register for a NYS permit. If an FLC works or obtains workers from other states, he or she may be required to also obtain a federal certificate. The USDOL issues certificates through the Wage and Hour Division, while New York State issues certificates through its Permit and Certification Unit. Each agency has a unique application process. The following section will explain how and when to apply for each certificate.

New York State Registration
In New York State, FLCs are required to register annually using form LS 113.1. The registration form is also available in Spanish and Haitian Creole, on our website. The application asks for specific information such as the farm you will be working for, the type of work that will be performed, the wages you or the farm employer agree to pay workers, the payday, who is responsible for paying workers and the location and description of the housing— if it is included as part of the work agreement. You must complete a separate application for each farm you work within New York State. The registration period begins on April 1st and is valid until March 31st of the following year. If you are applying for a certificate of registration for the first time, you will need to submit a set of fingerprints using an L1 Enrollment provider (see attached instructions). In New York State, you are required to submit fingerprints the first time you register and upon request from the Permit Unit. Fingerprints are not required annually to renew your registration. However, if your permit was revoked and you are re-applying for a certificate of registration, you must submit fingerprints as though it is a new application. There is no annual registration fee for the NYS Farm Labor Contractor permit.

Below is a suggested timeline for submitting an application for a certificate of FLC registration from New York State.
### Suggested Timeline for FLC Registration in NYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Work Begins</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 months (ex: Feb. 1)</td>
<td>Meet with employers to discuss contract terms, Complete application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month (ex: March 1)</td>
<td>Obtain required forms to submit with application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks (ex: March 15)</td>
<td>Submit completed application to Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist or Permit and Certificate Unit (as indicated on form); Receive temporary registration card (can only be obtained if you submit application to the Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist); Begin work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. April 1-15</td>
<td>Official certificate should arrive within 2-3 weeks by mail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Workers’ Compensation and Disability Insurance Coverage

To register as an FLC in New York State, you must show that your workers are covered in the case of an accident, by two different types of insurance coverage. The Workers’ Compensation program covers workers in the event of a workplace accident which requires medical treatment and causes an employee to miss work because of the injury. Workers’ Compensation is required for most businesses with employees in New York, with some limited exceptions. New York State disability benefits insurance provides temporary cash benefits paid to an eligible wage earner when he/she is disabled by an OFF THE JOB illness or injury, and for disabilities arising from pregnancies. Disability insurance coverage is generally not required for manual labor farms, but you should check with the farm employer to confirm that he/she does not need to provide disability coverage.

### Forms U 26.3 and DB-120.1

The Permit and Certificate Unit in Albany accepts forms U 26.3 as proof of Workers’ Compensation coverage and form DB-120.1 as proof of disability insurance coverage. If you carry insurance through a private provider, other forms may be accepted as proof of coverage. Although most farms that use manual labor are exempt from disability insurance coverage, you must still obtain a form that states why you are exempt. This exemption form (CE-200) is available online at [www.wcb.ny.gov](http://www.wcb.ny.gov).

New York State workers’ compensation law covers all farm employers’ employees including FLCs. You must provide a certificate of workers’ compensation coverage (U 26.3) or a waiver form CE-200 that explains that you did not obtain WC coverage on your own because your workers will be covered by the farm’s policy. The waivers can be obtained through [www.wcb.ny.gov](http://www.wcb.ny.gov). If you need assistance in obtaining a workers’ compensation policy or the CE-200 waiver, you should communicate with the grower that you are working with for assistance. Agriculture Labor Program staff cannot assist farm labor contractors in requesting a CE-200 exemption form.

Once the registration is complete and ready to send to the permit unit in Albany, the Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist may be able to provide you with a temporary registration card that allows you to work in NYS until your permanent card arrives. You should request the
temporary card if you plan to start work immediately. If you need a temporary card, you must provide the Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist with a copy of the completed registration and insurance documents for review:

Fax: 585-339-9457
Email: Caylin.Gwise@labor.ny.gov
Rochester Works
276 Waring Road
Rochester NY 14609

The permanent card will arrive in the mail approximately two weeks later. Be sure that the mailing address (if different from your permanent address) is correct so that the permit will reach you quickly. You are required to carry your permit with you at all times when you are working, including time spent transporting workers.

Send your completed application and supporting documents directly to the Permit and Certificate Unit:

New York State Department of Labor
Division of Labor Standards
State Office Campus,
Building 12, Room 266A
Albany, NY 12240
(518) 457-9000

Federal Farm Labor Contractor Registration
The USDOL requires you to register as an FLC before performing any farm labor contractor activities. The registration is free and the Form WH-530 includes much of the same information as that of the NYS registration. In addition to submitting a set of fingerprints with your initial application, the USDOL requires Farm Labor Contractors to resubmit fingerprints every three years. The USDOL requires additional information and coverage for certain activities like driving, transporting and providing or controlling worker housing. Also, if you employ anyone who performs FLC activities, for example, a driver who is paid by you, they will need to register with the USDOL. There is no fee for the driver or employee to register, though all permits will need to be renewed according to the expiration date on the registration card. The following list of forms may be required by the USDOL depending on your activities:

- Fingerprint Card, FD-258 (obtain from AgLS; submit with first application and every three years thereafter).
- Copy of Alien Registration Card
- Copy of Driver’s License
- Doctor’s Certificate, WH-515
- Vehicle Mechanical Inspection Report for Transportation Subject to Department of Transportation Requirement, WH-514; Fact Sheet #50 Vehicle Mechanical Inspection Report for Transportation Subject to Department of Labor Requirement, WH-514a; Fact Sheet #50
- Proof of Automobile Liability Insurance
- Workers’ Compensation Information or Certificate of Workers’ Compensation Insurance
- Insurance Cancellation Agreement under MSPA
- Housing Occupancy Certificate

For more information on the federal registration process and requirements, contact the Foreign Labor and Agriculture Specialist, or call or write the USDOL office in Atlanta, GA directly at the address below. If you have previously registered as a FLC, be sure to have your registration number or Social Security Number ready when you call.

U.S. Department of Labor
Wage Hour Division
Farm Labor Certificate Processing
90 Seventh Street Suite 13-100
San Francisco, CA 94103

Before Work Begins in New York
Under New York State labor law (Art.7, §215), all private sector employers are required to provide workers with a notice of pay rates at the time of hire. Recently, this section of the state’s labor law was modified to enhance worker protections and to clarify the responsibilities of employers. This set of amendments is known as the Wage Theft Prevention Act (WTPA). The WTPA affects some key aspects of how employers offer employment and manage their payroll record keeping. FLCs can be held legally responsible as a joint employer under the new state law. Note EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES outlined below.

Whether you are recruiting workers within New York or in another state, you must advise the worker of all terms of employment at the time of recruitment. If you are recruiting workers out of state the terms must be disclosed before travel begins. If a worker arrives to the job site and the terms are different than what was in the work agreement, you will be required to either meet the terms of the agreement and/or pay for return transportation to the point of recruitment unless the workers agrees to the new terms of employment. This also applies if you did not provide a work agreement at the point of recruitment. Completing a work agreement is the law and it minimizes the risk of having to pay to send a worker home who does not agree to the new terms of employment. More disclosure = less exposure!

The work agreement contains information such as where the farm is located, how much the workers will be paid, how long the job will last, the type of work, whether housing is included, etc. The law requires that you or the employer provide this information to workers in a language they understand, that they sign the form acknowledging the terms of the work agreement, that they are given a copy of the form and that you or the employer keeps the form for six years. The NYSDOL provides a work agreement template, available in English and Spanish, for employers to use in compliance with WTPA. This template (form LS309) is available online at labor.ny.gov or by contacting your local Agriculture Labor Specialist.

Federal requirements for vehicle inspections and insurance coverage
The Agriculture Labor Program does not enforce federal law; however, we will assist you with compliance of federal laws whenever possible. You must be in compliance with federal laws for transporting workers to maintain your permit in NYS. For this reason, we will provide limited
guidance regarding the driver’s license, insurance and inspection requirements involved in transporting workers. (See attached USDOL Fact Sheet).

**Working in New York State**
There are several factors that determine whether or not the relationship between an employer and a farm labor contractor is considered a form of “Joint Employment”. When FLCs and the farm employer are both employers of the workers, you will need to comply with all federal and state labor regulations regarding employment of migrant and/or seasonal farm workers. The following is a brief discussion of the most common topics that come up in seasonal agriculture. Contact your Agriculture Labor Specialist if you have specific questions about your employment situation.

**Housing**
Most farm workers in New York State are provided free housing as a benefit of their job. When worker housing is provided, there are strict regulations covering the upkeep, maintenance and security of the units. Regardless of whether you own or rent the housing, FLCs must inspect the premises to assure that it meets all codes and regulations for worker housing before anyone moves in. If five (5) or more workers will live there, it must be inspected and certified by the NYS Department of Health office that covers the county where the housing is located. See the appendix in this manual for a list of health departments in your area.

If you own or control the housing, we recommend you enter and inspect the housing at least once a week during the season and more often if necessary to keep it maintained properly. During the weekly inspection, look for things like missing batteries in the smoke detectors, ensure that fire extinguishers are in place and fully charged, first aid kits are full of supplies and hot water is available in the sinks and showers.

Check the worker housing for:
- clean drinking water
- adequate heat
- working electrical outlets
- secure entries
- window coverings
- clean and sanitary sleeping quarters with mattresses and frames
- signs of insect infestations

Finally, the “Certificate of Migrant Housing” permit (provided by the DOH after inspection) must be posted in the camp, along with the USDOL Housing Occupancy Certificate WH-521 (see Appendix for samples).

All housing complaints and repairs must be addressed immediately. If the housing is under the ownership or management of the farm employer, problems should be reported to him/her directly. If the problems are significant, for example, there is no running water in the housing or the heating unit failed, you must correct it immediately or find alternate housing for the workers that comply with the regulations. You and/or the employer may be fined for housing/labor camp
violations by a number of government agencies, including the NYSDOL, the USDOL and the NYS Department of Health.

Pay: Charges, Deductions and Record Keeping
Under the new regulations of the WTPA there are fines for violating wage laws or failing to provide work agreements and wage statements- also known as “pay stubs”. The paystub must include the farm contact information (including phone number); hours worked and rate of pay, piece rate and number or pieces, and description and amount of any deductions.

You must keep track of hours worked even if the worker is paid on a piece rate basis to comply with the WTPA and NYS farm minimum wage law. FLCs or growers are required to keep all payroll records for 6 years, including worker names and addresses, payroll records, signed work agreements and any and all agreements between FLC and employer (i.e., workers’ compensation coverage, transportation authorization, camp inspections). These records must be made available upon request of the NYSDOL.

Allowed Standard Deductions
There are four standard deductions that are allowed to be withheld from a worker’s wages: Federal and State incomes taxes, Social Security and Medicare. These four deductions are established after an employee completes an I-9 and W-4 at the time of hire. Personal loans, utility charges, transportation charges, and housing charges MAY be allowed under certain circumstances, but will require additional documentation and require you to follow a specific process. Please seek assistance from your Agriculture Labor Specialist BEFORE you make any non-sanctioned deductions from an employee’s paycheck. Likewise, demanding cash from an employee for services may be considered an illegal “kickback” or deduction.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Workers’ Compensation (WC) Liability
It is your responsibility as an FLC to make sure that your workers are covered by these programs. This will often mean communicating with the employer to find out whether he/she is required to carry UI or WC and whether they are up to date on their payments to these programs.

“Do’s & Don’ts” Regarding Worker’s Pay

DON’T withhold checks or paystubs: You must promptly pay or distribute checks whether they are provided to you by the employer or if you maintain a separate payroll.

DON’T charge migrant seasonal farmworkers for or make deductions for housing, utilities, rides, or cashing checks.

DO provide room and board: If work is delayed for any reason you and/or the employer must provide meals and lodging to the workers until work begins.

DO keep separate records for each worker: Family members or friends are not allowed to work together on one record even if they request to do so; children who are not on the payroll cannot “help” their parents.
DO use acceptable forms of payment: Workers can be paid in cash, by check or debit card (without fees) or direct deposit. Paper checks or cash must always be available as an option to a worker, and all forms of payment must be accompanied by a wage statement or “pay stub”. For assistance with wage statements, contact the AgLP.

Transportation
If you provide transportation to migrant and/or seasonal workers, the vehicle you are operating must be inspected by a certified mechanic and pass a state inspection. In addition to passing a state vehicle inspection, a mechanic must complete either Vehicle Mechanical Inspection Report WH-514 or WH-514a depending on the type of vehicle and how it will be used. If you are personally driving the vehicle, you must also pass a medical exam by a doctor.

Often FLCs use the services of a third person, usually an employee with a vehicle, to act as a shuttle for the other employees. While this may be a convenient solution, there are several safety and payroll issues to consider, such as: the health of the driver; whether or not the driver’s vehicle is in good working condition and how much they are charging for trips between the worksites and the workers’ home or town. If employees are charged, the fees must be reasonable in relation to the actual costs of transportation and the driver may be required to be registered as an FLC or an FLC employee with the US DOL. Examples of reasonable fees include the federal mileage reimbursement rate. As of this writing, the current rate is $0.545; but you should check the IRS.gov website for updates.

Similarly, if farm vehicles are used throughout the season, it is the joint responsibility of the FLC and the farm employer to ensure that workers are transported in a safe vehicle. The vehicle should be given a visual inspection daily to detect mechanical issues and ensure worker safety. Maintenance and repairs should be completed promptly. Transportation to and from the job/work site must comply with federal and state regulations as discussed above.

Workplace Safety & Field Sanitation
The employer must provide safe drinking water, at the employer’s expense, and make it readily available to workers in the field. Likewise, toilet and hand-washing facilities for workers (including transportation to and from the facilities) must be located together and paid for by the employer. If five (5) or more people are working at the same site, the toilet and hand-washing facilities must be within a quarter mile walk or at the closest point accessible by motor vehicle. Additional toilet and hand washing facilities should be provided when there are 20 or more workers on one site (20 or more = 2 toilets; 40 or more = 3 toilets, etc.); if there are 50% or more workers who are women in a group of 20 workers, then separate facilities for each sex shall be provided (20 workers, 10 of whom are women = 2 facilities, one for men, one for women).

Meal Periods and Breaks
Under New York State labor law, workers are entitled to a 30 minute uninterrupted meal period between 11:00am and 2:00pm. As a general rule, during a 6 hour work day, workers should have a 30 minute uninterrupted meal period for lunch (may be unpaid). The FLC or employer can elect to pay workers for this meal period, which may improve worker satisfaction and retention.
A worker whose shift starts before 11:00am and extends past 7:00pm is entitled to an additional 20 minute (may be unpaid) meal period between 5:00pm and 7:00pm. This often applies to seasonal workers in the early part of the harvest season, when the work days are longer.

**Revocation of Farm Labor Contractor Permit and Disbarment**

The regulations listed above exist to ensure that workers are treated fairly and can perform their jobs safely. As an FLC, it is your responsibility to make sure these basic conditions are met at each job site you provide or supervise workers. Your registration and right to work as an FLC in New York may be revoked if you violate any of the state or federal labor laws including safety, health, wages and hours. Failing to pay workers the agreed upon wage, misrepresenting or falsifying information on the permit application, failing to provide workers’ compensation coverage or transporting or driving workers without the proper authorization are some examples of violations that could cause you to lose your permit. The Commissioner of Labor may revoke, suspend or refuse to issue a permit after an investigation and a hearing if requested. Once the permit is denied or revoked, the applicant may not work in New York State as a Farm Labor Contractor for a period of up to 24 months. After the disbarment period is over, the new application must be received by the permit unit at least ninety (90) days before new work is scheduled to begin. If you have any questions about these regulations, please call an Agriculture Labor Specialist at 877-466-9757 for more information.

**Best Practices for Farm Labor Contractors**

Implementing good management practices that satisfy the above requirements can also help protect your business. While New York State labor law does not require a written agreement between the employer and the FLC, it is highly advisable that FLCs seek a pay agreement in writing and signed by both the FLC and the farm employer. This allows both parties to state their expectations of each other and serves as a written record to refer to if disagreements arise during or after the term of the contract. Most agreements between FLCs and employers are based on production rates for the workers you provide and range from a percentage of gross wages (7-10%) or a flat rate for pieces picked by your workers ($2 per box, for example).

Your written agreement should include what responsibilities you agree to undertake. Will you be transporting workers to buy groceries, supervising camp conditions, supervising in the fields or other actions to assist the employer with labor management? These details should be included. If your role is limited to supplying workers make sure this is explained in the agreement. A work agreement between yourself and the employer can also serve as a valuable record of how your crews and time were allocated throughout the growing season and may be helpful as a planning tool for next season. Consider reviewing your arrangement with the employer each year to determine what worked and what did not, what projections or rates were inaccurate and what changes might be made for next year.

Negotiating the terms of a work agreement can also be helpful in deciding how you and the employer ensure that the work site is in compliance with labor laws. For example, discuss who will provide water, hand washing and restroom facilities for the workers.
Harassment and Discrimination
All workers in New York State have the right to work in an environment free of violence, discrimination or intimidation. There are various forms of discrimination and harassment that can occur in any workplace. Harassment can occur between co-workers or between employees and supervisors. NYS and federal law prohibits discrimination and other forms of abuse in the workplace. Consider the following definitions of discrimination and harassment and think about strategies to discourage this type of behavior in your workplace.

Discrimination: treating an employee differently based on characteristics other than work performance (race, national origin, sex, religion, marital status or sexual orientation). An example of discrimination includes not hiring a woman based on assumptions that she will not be able to perform as well as a male employee.

Verbal Abuse: common forms of verbal abuse include name-calling, yelling, teasing and making threats.

Sexual harassment: any unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Hostile Work Environment: intimidation, threats, ridicule, insults that affect an employee’s job performance and are based on a protected characteristic such as sex, national origin, religion, etc.

Retaliation: disciplining, suspending, demoting or dismissing any worker who files a complaint regarding alleged violations of labor law is considered retaliation. Under the WTPA employers are prohibited from retaliating against employees who have filed a complaint against their employer.

More information can be found online at the Division of Human Rights’ website, here: http://www.dhr.ny.gov/

Labor Trafficking in Agriculture
Labor trafficking is a serious crime, affecting communities around the world and in New York State. Labor trafficking is characterized by workers having little or no control over their earnings (if there are even any earnings due to illegal deductions) or their work schedule. Victims of labor trafficking may also have limited freedom of movement. The employer or supervisor may use force, fraud, coercion or intimidation to create a climate of fear and prevent the victim from speaking out or fleeing the situation. New York State and the federal government each have anti-trafficking laws that may be enforced against an individual who is suspected of labor trafficking. There are serious punishments for committing the crime of human trafficking. If you are convicted in New York State, you could be imprisoned for up to seven (7) years.

Some of the more common “red flags” that we see are when an employer holds a worker’s passport or travel documents, an employer insists on interpreting for the worker (especially when in the presence of the farm employer or a government official) or an employer promises to help a worker with immigration or pay a large sum of money at the end of the season, but never does.

Conclusions
New York State is home to a diverse and robust agriculture industry. The Agriculture Labor Program works with farm employers, FLCs and workers to ensure that living and working
conditions on the state’s numerous farms are safe and fair. The goal of this manual is to educate and guide FLCs about applicable labor laws that impact their work in New York State. The Appendix contains more links to valuable resources and our bilingual field staff is always available to answer questions and provide assistance.

Appendix: Additional Resources

Agriculture Labor Program. New York State-Department of Labor. Phone: 877-466-9757 or online at: https://labor.ny.gov/immigrants/agriculture-labor-program.shtm


1 Internal Revenue Service; Publication 51, “Agricultural Employer’s Tax Guide.” is available online at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p51.pdf, and contains information for employers and Farm Labor Contractors or “Crew Leaders.”

U.S. Department of Labor; Fact Sheet #35 “Joint Employment and Independent Contractors Under the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act” explains how to determine if an individual is an independent contractor working with a farmer or an employee. It is available online at: http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs35.pdf