



PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Workers from Latin America are a critical component of today's agricultural workforce in the United States. According to the National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc. (2009), 83 percent of all U.S. farm workers are Hispanic — from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and other Central and South American countries—and 81 percent of farm workers speak Spanish as their primary language.

Almost all Latino/a workers migrate for economic reasons; they hope to earn a decent living so they can send money home to improve the lives of the families they left behind. Some workers migrate alone, leaving family behind; others bring immediate family members with them but may leave aging parents behind in their home countries. Thus, their personal lives can be characterized as bi-national — spanning two countries, languages, cultures, economic systems, and ways of life.

Balancing work and family demands is difficult for all workers, but the issue is more complex for migrant workers whose families are located in two countries. We contend that a better understanding of these workers' unique family challenges will benefit both employers and the workers themselves. We hope that listening to workers' suggestions of ways for employers to support their ability to balance work and family demands will lead to improved workplace conditions and thus higher worker productivity and satisfaction.

Funding for the research study and the development of these outreach materials was provided by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture International Science and Education Program. Any questions about the research study can be directed to Catherine Solheim, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, University of Minnesota (csolheim@umn.edu).