

QSS20S1 Final Project Memo 1

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1 What I learned

Violations on all counts – H2-A, FLSA and MSPA – have been on a sharp and steady decline since 2013. This is a count of detected violations, however – I wonder if these numbers are indicative of a true decrease or if employers are just getting better at evading them. Violations are not distributed evenly among employers. It seems that there are many employers with one chance violation – approx. 30 percent – and then the other cluster is on serial offenders. It seems these serial offenders might be worth more of the data examination time. Farm Labor Contractors – FLC's – are cited for violations at a 10 percent higher clip than other agriculture employers. Given the contractual nature of their employment, this makes sense – less regard for employees and shorter term relationships with them. California, Florida and Iowa seem to be problem states. Data suggests that they are home to the most violations and the highest concentrations of violations. Interestingly, it seems like violations are also concentrated in specific counties. I wonder how much of the law pertaining to violations is specific to the counties? Are these counties breeding grounds for violations for loose regulations or just because they are agricultural hotbeds?

2 Gaps and questions

With regard to violation distributions, it seems that at least 30 percent of the violations that are one-offs for employers are not really worth pursuing prosecution on. Are the employers who have 5+ violations larger farms or small ones that are trying to make ends meet? I hope it is the latter, as I imagine it is difficult to successfully fine and damage larger farms – the article mentioned Perdue farms having an insane number of violations, but I bet they are pretty hard to knock down. FLC's seem to much more frequent offenders. I would love to pin down how they get away with it / if there is something underlying – size of operation, location, county, certain laws, anything of the sort.