



# Protect American Blueberry Farms Codify the H-2A AEWL Interim Final Rule

## Blueberries are a Labor-Intensive, Permanent Crop

Fresh market blueberries must be hand harvested and carefully pruned to meet quality standards. While growers continue investing in mechanization, skilled hand labor remains essential. Labor represents more than 40% of total farm expenses, and blueberry fields are long-term capital investments that produce for decades.

## The Challenge: Escalating AEWL Rates

The H-2A program allows growers to hire temporary seasonal workers only after the federal government certifies that insufficient U.S. workers are available. However, prior AEWL calculations rose sharply year after year, reaching an average of \$17.86 in 2025 across blueberry-producing states and outpacing major economic indicators.

## The Solution: AEWL Interim Final Rule (IFR)

The 2025 IFR modernizes wage calculations by using state-specific Bureau of Labor Statistics data, establishing entry-level and experienced skill categories, and accounting for employer-provided housing. On average, the IFR reduced AEWL rates by approximately \$3 per hour in 2026 compared to 2025 in blueberry-producing states.

## Statewide Hourly AEWLs Determined Under the DOL IFR

State	2025 FLS-Based AEWL	Skill Level I (Entry-Level)	Skill Level II (Experienced Level)	H-2A Adverse Compensation Adjustment
California	\$19.97	\$19.75	\$19.97	7.08%
Florida	\$16.23	\$14.77	\$16.23	13.26%
Georgia	\$16.08	\$14.68	\$16.08	17.63%
Indiana	\$19.57	\$18.18	\$19.57	13.98%
Michigan	\$18.15	\$18.50	\$18.15	4.67%
Mississippi	\$14.83	\$14.53	\$14.83	8.49%
New Jersey	\$17.96	\$17.20	\$17.96	8.52%
North Carolina	\$16.16	\$15.81	\$16.16	8.38%
Oregon	\$19.82	\$19.25	\$19.82	10.29%
Washington	\$19.82	\$19.25	\$19.82	10.29%

## Economic Impact

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, correcting inflated wage calculations is expected to save agricultural employers approximately \$2.46 billion annually and more than \$17 billion over ten years, while maintaining statutory protections for U.S. workers.

Research conducted by a former member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers found using an AEWL that more closely reflects the economics of an agricultural industry that competes in a global market would better protect U.S. workers, support domestic food production, increase Americans' consumption of domestically grown fruits and vegetables, create jobs, and strengthen rural economic growth.

**Codify the H-2A AEWL Interim Final Rule into statute to provide certainty for blueberry growers, protect rural jobs, preserve long-term agricultural investments, and ensure continued domestic fruit production.**