

Title: Risk and Resilience in Agri-food Labor Markets

Conveners:

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Topic:

Our working group will bring together researchers with expertise in the economics of agricultural labor. Our group brings unique perspectives from distinct developed country contexts and will focus our presentations and conversations on what it means for labor markets to be resilient in the current, yet heterogeneous geopolitical, environmental, and social climate. Resilience is often conceived of as the ability of a system to return to its pre-shock levels following a shock. While this may be a compelling definition, whether a return to the “status quo” is a desirable feature of labor markets in developed countries’ agricultural systems remains an open question and serves as an important motivation for our group. In this working group, we confront various pressures that impact agricultural employees, particularly migrants and temporary workers. These risks include a rise in difficult working conditions including increased exposure to extreme weather events (e.g., heat), socio-political shifts, and market-based changes in demand and supply. We explore whether the policy and market-based tools currently in place in our respective countries have been successful at mitigating risks or promoting resilience in agricultural labor markets. These talks, and the discussion that will follow, speak directly to the conference theme of **Dynamics of work**, as we explore many of the short-term events and long-term trends that are causing agricultural labor markets to respond across many different margins.

Aim:

The goal of our working group is to share new knowledge on the current structural challenges reshaping labor markets in the different developed country contexts (in particular, the U.S.A., Australia, and Europe) where we currently work. One commonality across these contexts is that much of the strenuous work of agricultural production is done by migrant workers, such that current market and political structures may be displacing risk on vulnerable populations. Our hope is that our presentations prompt a frank discussion among presenters and attendees of the sustainability of this current model.

Format:

Our working group is requesting one 90 minute session. During that time, each presenter will share a brief (roughly 10 minute) presentation of ongoing work in this area. Each presenter will focus on a different pressure point (climatic, political, market-based, etc.) in the current labor system, followed by a group discussion in which we hope to engage audience members about the commonalities and complexities across these pressures and in different geopolitical contexts.