

Survey Results: Training, Information Transfer, Safety, Health, and Housing on Vermont Dairy Farms with Spanish Speaking Employees

Between September and December 2010 interviews were conducted on 26 of the estimated 37 dairy farms with Latino employees. In all, 26 owners/managers and 53 Latino employees were interviewed. Responses have been compiled and analyzed to inform UVM Extensions work in 4 main areas of interest: communication, work, health, and the home. Feedback from the producer/manager and employee allows us to better understand the population this project seeks to serve as well as support program development which meets the real needs dairy farmers and their Spanish speaking employees have identified. Here are some of the results that stood out to us; we hope you too find these interesting.

COMMUNICATION: Producers/managers' report that **69%** of Spanish speaking employees do not speak any English or have limited to basic vocabulary. Workers report that **98%** of their bosses speak no Spanish or have limited to basic vocabulary. **62%** of producer/managers and **57%** of workers report using a mix of English, Spanish, and gestures to communicate. **89%** of producers/managers and **87%** of workers report communicating day to day information verbally.

WORK: **12%** of farms have monthly meetings with their employees and an interpreter. Of those who do not have monthly meetings, **44%** said they would have monthly meetings if an interpreter was provided at no cost, **44%** said they would not. **12%** said they might. **76%** of workers who currently do not have monthly meetings said that they would like to have monthly meetings with an interpreter. **87%** of workers said they would like their boss to train them more about their job. **78%** of employees report being trained at least partially by a Spanish speaking coworker. **52%** report they were trained only by a Spanish speaking coworker. **Less than 50%** of employers and employees reported that they cover farm safety, milk quality, housing safety, and housing expectations in training for workers. Some farms and employees reported they do not communicate work expectations, pay or hours with their employees as they expect a previous employee has shared this information.

HEALTH: **79%** of employees interviewed have not been to the doctor in the past year. **91%** have not been to the dentist. However, **47%** report they have been hurt on the job and **38%** have been sick on current farm. **83%** report language to be a barrier to health care access, **67.9%** report transportation, **60.4%** would have difficulty finding a doctor, **47.2%** would be afraid to go to the doctor, **45.3%** say they would have problems finding shift coverage, **39.6%** report money as a barrier

HOME: **85%** of producers/managers have at least one house maintenance concern: **77%** are concerned with cleanliness, **82%** grease build up on stove and **59%** food storage. **87%** of employees said they do not have difficulty with house maintenance and cleaning. **81%** of households reported having flies, **69%** mice or rats, **46%** cockroaches, **23%** of households report bedbugs. **38.5%** of producers/managers report they discuss house maintenance guidelines with the workers to ensure the upkeep and safety of the house.

All of the 37 dairy farms that we have confirmed as hiring Latino workers were sent a letter that shared many of these results and were invited to participate in the pilot communication and training project. Many of these same producers/managers have been invited through the luncheon, a meeting with the young executives at the St. Albans co-op and personal farm visits. In all, despite the identified

need for communication support through the survey, only 4 Franklin County dairy farms have chosen to participate.