

Texas Farmworker Housing
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Without radical intervention, Texas farmworkers will continue to lack decent housing conditions. A range of housing options and programs need to be available for farmworkers: temporary, rental, transitional toward ownership, self-help alternatives, homebuyer assistance, rehabilitation, and overall asset-building strategies.

MET and a consortium of stakeholders proposes to work in partnership with national and Texas USDA Rural Development leadership to find solutions for this underserved rural population.

Current Situation

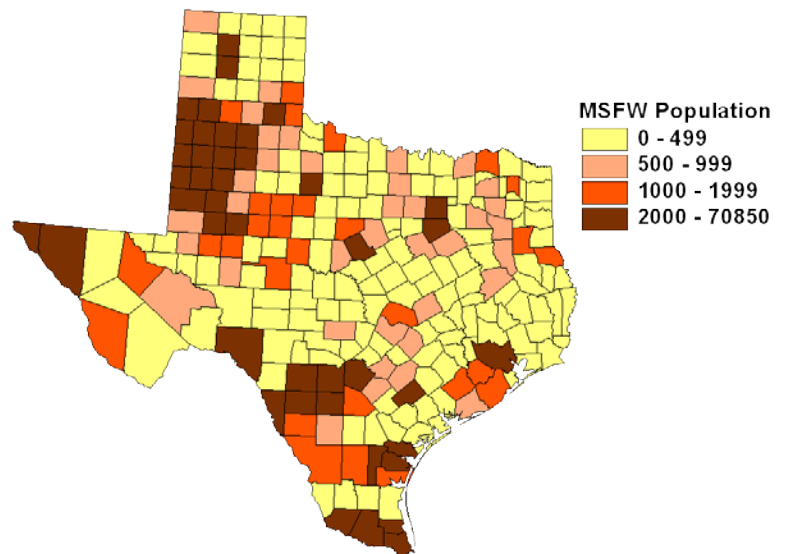
Farmworker wages are not sufficient to secure decent rental or ownership homes. Nationally farmworkers household incomes are between \$7,500 and \$10,000.ⁱ MET clients (averaging 4-person households) earned an average annual wage of \$8,560,ⁱⁱ which is 39% of the poverty rate;ⁱⁱⁱ 60 percent of all US farmworkers live below the poverty level and the poverty rate for these workers exceeds that of all other general occupation categories.^{iv} Median weekly earnings of full-time farmworkers are 59% of those for all wage and salary workers, although work-weeks usually are upwards of 50 hours a week.^v

Texas' publicly funded rental units serve only a fraction of the population. Agricultural employers rarely provide housing for workers.

Many farmworkers own typical colonias-type housing in substandard and crowded conditions. Migrant farmworkers must pay for temporary housing in the migrant stream while still maintaining permanent residences in the homebase.

Map below was prepared by National Center for Farmworker Health Using HHS findings, Dr. Alice Larson study.

Texas has the second largest farmworker population in the nation. Researchers estimate that 361,411 seasonal and migrant farmworkers (and household members) live and work in Texas.^{vi} Texas is unique in being (1) a migrant worker supplier to other states, (2) a homebase for local farm laborers, and (3) a supplier to other areas of Texas. Most Texas farmworkers live in the Rio Grande Valley and the Winter Garden region, with large populations also in El Paso (ie all border regions), and a large population in the South Plains/Panhandle region (where farmworkers live permanently, may travel to other states, or may travel up from South Texas to work in the area).



State	Adjusted MSFW Farmworker Estimate	Migrant Farmworkers	Seasonal Farmworkers	Non-Farmworkers in Migrant Households	Non-Farmworkers in Seasonal Households	MSFW Farmworkers & household members	% of Total MSFW & household members
California	731,745	338,798	392,947	124,508	445,897	1,302,150	53%
Texas	196,704	131,638	65,066	77,844	86,863	361,411	15%
Washington	185,088	64,411	120,677	16,531	84,696	286,315	12%
Florida	194,817	120,430	74,387	44,556	43,914	283,287	11%
N. Carolina	100,316	62,697	37,618	24,724	30,851	155,891	6%
Arkansas	16,061	10,696	5,364	7,908	2,727	26,695	1%
Mississippi	10,368	2,848	7,520	959	4,727	16,054	1%
Oklahoma	8,111	3,391	4,721	1,524	4,412	14,047	1%
Louisiana	7,636	2,069	5,566	345	3,229	11,210	0.5%
Maryland	7,934	7,030	905	981	606	9,522	0.4%
10 state total:	1,458,780	744,008	714,771	299,880	707,922	2,466,582	100.0%

Source: Migrant Health Program, Bureau of Primary Health Care, Health Resources and Services Administration, Alice C. Larson, PhD, Larson Assistance Services, September 2000.

The figures above show the estimated number of farmworkers and household members for the 10 states with the largest farmworker populations. The next to the last column includes the number of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, plus the number of non-farmworkers who live in the farmworker household (i.e. non-farmworker spouses, children, and extended household members).

Texas has 1,402 publicly funded multi-family units reserved for farmworkers that were financed by US Department of Agriculture under the Rural Development Section 514 loan and Section 516 grant programs. Texas' inventory includes some of the oldest and heaviest used facilities in the nation and this inventory needs an infusion of improvements to be viable for the future. Losses in the inventory are occurring more rapidly than improvements and additions. In the past few years, there has been a net loss of 148 units. Of these 148, 104 units were removed from the Section 514/516 program due to foreclosure or closing. Another 44 units were lost due to rehabilitation and reconfiguration, which resulted in units superior to those lost. Thus the following description treats losses from foreclosure or closing separately from those caused by foreclosure.

There was a net loss of 104 units due to foreclosure or closing. A total of 146 units were removed from the farm labor housing program due to foreclosure or closing of three facilities listed below. Forty-two newly constructed units in Del Rio Texas account for the gain.

Loss over past 6 years = 146 from foreclosure or closing, as follows:

- 58 Pecos – removal of units from farm labor housing inventory (still serve low income)
- 10 Quitaque – removal of units from farm labor housing inventory (still serve low income)
- 78 Floydada – closed for past 3 years and requested removal of 78 units from program

Gain over past 6 years = 42

- 42 New facility in Del Rio, Villas de Val Verde

Net loss = 104

A second group, with a net loss of 44 units, has a happier ending. These units were lost as a result of rehabilitation and reconfiguration, with remaining units improved. Seventy-six units were lost in the demolition of units in Dimmit and remodeling units in Lorenzo, as outlined below. Thirty-two units were built new to replace those demolished at Dimmit. Obviously the new and rehabilitated units are superior than those replaced, but a net loss of 44 units resulted.

Loss over past 6 years = 76 from rehabilitation and reconfiguration, as follows:

- 58 Dimmit (Azteca) demolished 58 units and replaced them with new units (listed as “gain” below). Even with fewer units, however, the facility can accommodate the same number of families after demolition as before. New units are better configured to accommodate families than were demolished units.
- 18 Lorenzo – remodeled 58 units into 40 units that are better configured to accommodate families

Gain over past 6 years = 32

- 32 Dimmit replaced demolished units with 32 new construction units

Net loss = 44

Combined Net Loss (foreclosure, closure, demolition, rehabilitation): 148

Of the remaining 1,402 units, about half are more than 20 years old and will need renovation attention in the immediate future. A plan for inventory repair or replacement is needed. Without action, Texas will continue to lose more farmworker housing units than it gains.

Current USDA Inventory List

Texas Farm Labor Housing - Section 514/516 Inventory

<u>Region</u>	<u>Name of Project</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u># of Units in 2009</u>
Panhandle/Plains	1 Amistad Housing	Hereford	Deaf Smith	50
	2 Azteca Economic Apartments	Dimmitt	Castro	80
	3 Muleshoe Labor Housing	Muleshoe	Bailey	73
	4 Windmill Village	Littlefield	Lamb	21
	5 Housing Authority of Plainview Court	Plainview	Hale	160
	6 Paducah Housing Authority	Paducah	Cottle	16
	7 Morton Meadows	Morton	Cochran	21
	8 Plains East Apartments	Anton	Hockley	14
	9 Lorenzo Farm Labor Housing	Lorenzo	Crosby	40
TransTexas	10 Herbert Tio Cooper Apartments	El Paso	El Paso	50
	11 Del Rio Housing Authority	Del Rio	Val Verde	42
	12 Crystal City Farm Labor Housing	Crystal City	Zavala	26
	13 Enrique Montalvo Riverside Manor	Eagle Pass	Maverick	60
	14 Aldo Tatangelo Housing	Laredo	Webb	48
Rio Grande Valley	15 Colonia Remigo Valdesm Jr.	San Antonio	Bexar	75
	16 Memorial Apartments	McAllen	Hidalgo	246
	17 Northside Apartments	Weslaco	Hidalgo	289
	18 San Jaun Farm Labor Housing	San Juan	Hidalgo	32
	19 Willacy Housing Authority	Raymondville	Willacy	59
	<u>Total Facilities</u>			19
	<u>Total Units</u>			1402
	<u>Net Unit Loss since 2004</u>			(148)

While publicly funded farmworker housing has 1,402 units, private employers also sometimes provide housing for temporary employees. Housing for migrant workers living in a unit temporarily must be licensed by Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' (TDHCA) Manufactured Housing Division, which maintains a list of licensed facilities. TDHCA's list shows private employers provided 633 units with capacity to house 3,245 workers. Of these, 410 units are USDA-financed (Section 514/516 units are among licensed facilities when units are rented to migrants). When these 410 units are removed from the count, private employers provide 206 units with a capacity to house 1,450 persons.

Thus, in total, Texas has a stock of 1,402 publicly funded units and an additional 206 temporary farmworker housing units, totaling 1,608 units for farmworkers in the state, with capacity to house 7,058 persons. So Texas' current stock can accommodate about 2% of the farmworker population.

Obviously the shortage is severe – a gap of 88,588 units. Adding to the severity is the age and disrepair of the publicly-financed stock, and the diminishing practice of growers willing to provide housing to their workers.

Texas: Public & Private Farm Labor Housing Inventory & Need Analysis

<u>2007 Inventory</u>	<u>Total Facilities</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>FW + HH members</u>	<u>GAP</u>
Section 514/516 Inventory	19	1,402	5,608 *		
Employer-Based Migrant Housing	25	206	1,450		
	44	1,608	7,058	361,411	354,353

*capacity assumed at 4 persons per unit occupying Section 514/516 units

<u>Estimated Additional Housing Needed</u>	<u>Total Facilities</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
<i>assumes average of 4 persons per unit</i>		88,588	354,353

The July 2008 farm bill expanded the definition of who qualifies to live in units financed by USDA. The definition now includes processing and packaging workers in addition to field workers. Thus the demand for farmworker housing, with new definitions applied, is much more extensive than it was in prior years. The huge gap in units needed compared to current capacity is now much greater than in the past.

ⁱ US Department of Labor, *National Agricultural Workers Survey*, <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/naws.cfm>

ⁱⁱ MET 2008 client records

ⁱⁱⁱ US Department of Health and Human Services, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/09poverty.shtml>

^{iv} US Department of Labor, *National Agricultural Workers Survey*, <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/naws.cfm>

^v US Department of Agriculture *Profile of Hired Farmworkers, A 2008 Update* <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR60/>

^{vi} Larson, Alice C., US Department of Health and Human Services, Migrant Health Branch, *MSFW Enumeration Profiles – Texas (09/2000) and Louisiana (09/2000)*