


CFAES

EST. 1870

WE SUSTAIN LIFE

Now Hiring:  
Finding Labor for your Farm

2024 Pumpkin Boot Camp  
Dr. Margaret Jodlowski, AEDE

 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

1

Outline

CFAES

- Status of agricultural labor market
- "Traditional" methods of finding agricultural workers
- What to do when those methods don't work?

2

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2

CFAES

Status of agricultural labor  
market

3

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3

### The post-pandemic labor market

- Post pandemic, workers have a lot more bargaining power and are using that to move between jobs at much higher rates than ever before
- Ag is facing increasing wage competition from its traditional competitors (construction, etc.) but also new competitors (such as food service)
- Labor market exits remain high, exacerbating both of these issues

4

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

4

---

---

---

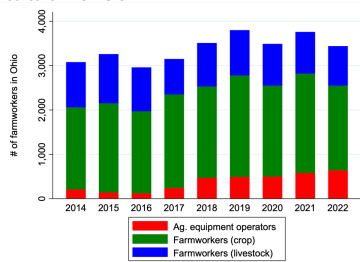
---

---

---

---

### Very few agricultural workers:



Download

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

5

---

---

---

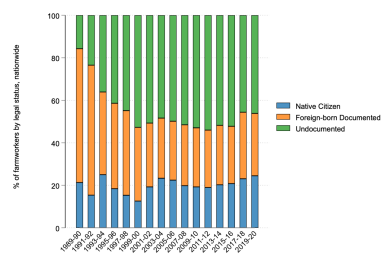
---

---

---

---

### Proportion of workers by legal status, nationwide:



6

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

6

---

---

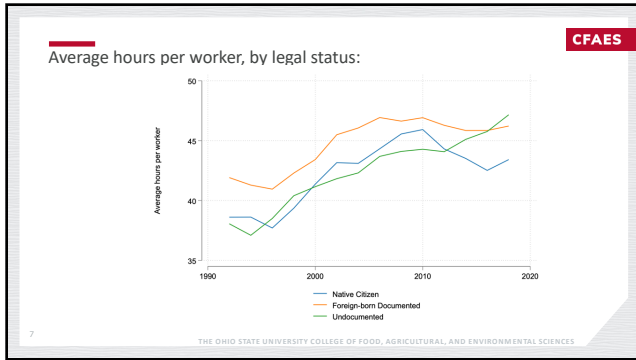
---

---

---

---

---



7

---

---

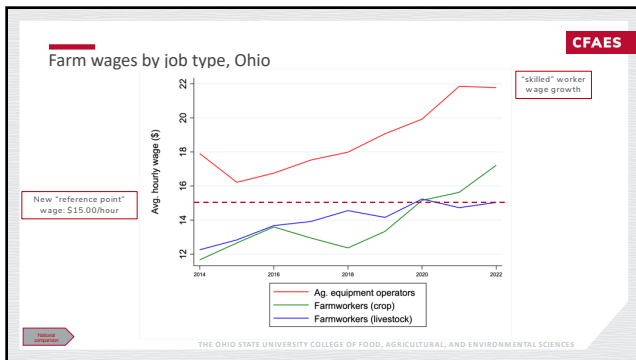
---

---

---

---

---



8

---

---

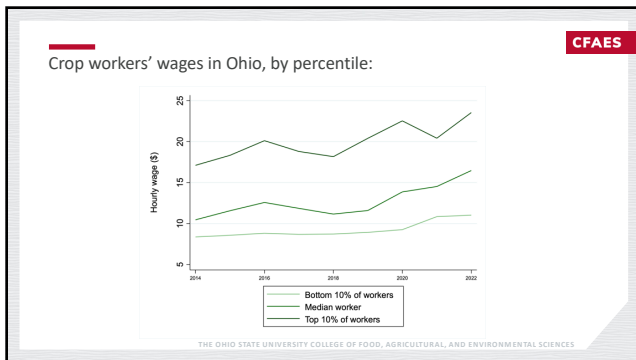
---

---

---

---

---



9

---

---

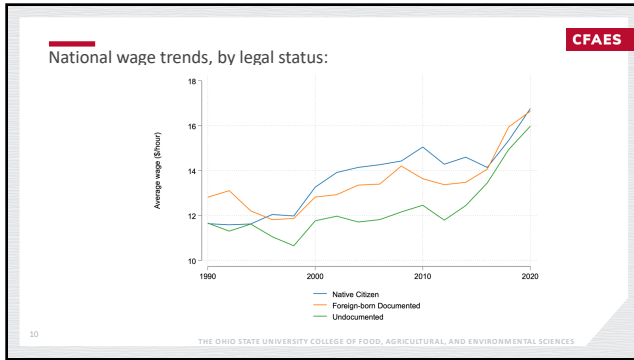
---

---

---

---

---



10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Discussion:**

Have you noticed any changes in the characteristics of crop workers?

Is wage pressure more noticeable for new or returning workers?

11 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CFAES

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**“Traditional” methods of finding agricultural workers**

12 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CFAES

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Determine your labor needs

- Seasonality: importance of thinking ahead!
  - Anticipate your busy times
- How much labor is needed?
  - Think about trade-offs between more workers working fewer hours vs. fewer workers working more hours
- What is needed?
  - Job description should be balanced: accurate representation of work but also sell the job

13

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Wages, wages, wages

- Wage rate remains the most important factor determining whether someone will take a job
  - Not the **only** factor, however!
- Need to keep pace with other operators in your area and other industries
  - Pay attention to the AEWR (even if you don't have H-2A workers)
  - It is more costly to train new workers, so there are benefits to rewarding good employees you already have

14

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Strong wage growth in competing industries:

12 month percent change in average weekly wage, Leisure and Hospitality Private Mar 2022-Mar 2023 (p)

Color Thresholds
10.0% to 20.0%
11.0% to 11.9%
12.0% to 12.9%
13.0% to 13.9%
14.0% to 14.9%
15.0% to 15.9%
16.0% to 16.9%
17.0% to 17.9%
18.0% to 18.9%
19.0% to 19.9%
20.0%

15

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

15

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

CFAES

### Other means of attracting & retaining workers:

- Standard benefits (vacation time, health insurance, etc.) are great but not everything 
- Quality of work environment matters a lot
  - Type of boss 
  - How you are evaluated
- A fulfilling/rewarding job 

16 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

CFAES

### Traditional methods/best practices:

- Print (newspaper, flyers, etc.)
- Social Media
- Schools

"Easier" but less indication of quality

- References from present employees
- Word-of-Mouth
- Family

More leg-work but gives you a sense of kind of worker

17 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

CFAES

### Discussion:

Which, if any, of the "traditional" methods have worked?

Which industries do you feel like you are competing with for workers?

18 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

CFAES

## What to do when those methods don't work?

19
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

CFAES

### Non-traditional sources to consider:

- Employment agencies
  - Need to be clear about the nature of agricultural work
- Targeting individuals
  - May need to be proactive in securing good workers
- Stay-at-home parents
  - May require more flexibility in scheduling
- Retirees
  - Flexibility may also be key here (types of tasks, schedule)

20
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

CFAES

### Growth in Ohio's H-2A worker population:

- Visa program for **temporary/seasonal ag labor**
- Application can be complex
  - Costly in terms of time or money
  - Traditionally viewed as the labor supply of last resort

#### What do workers receive?

- Adverse Effect Wage Rate
- Non-wage benefits
  - No-cost housing
  - Transportation
  - Meals

21
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

21

---

---

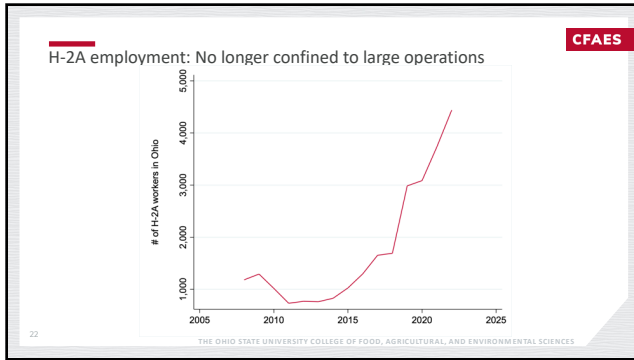
---

---

---

---

---



22

---

---

---

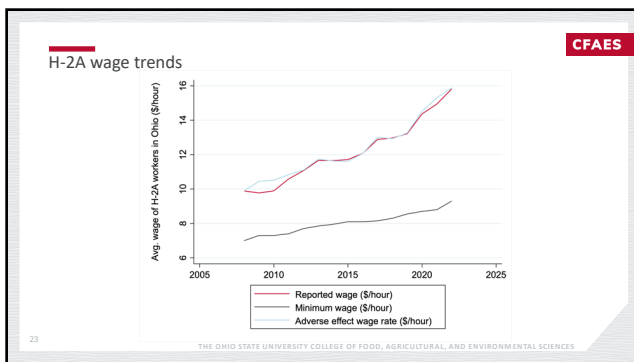
---

---

---

---

---



23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Agricultural labor policy feels like a non-starter**

- Farm Bill discussions getting a lot of attention; labor issues not main factor there
- Higher wage bills contributing to overall uncertainty / production pressure in farm economy, which informs Farm Bill discussions
- Requires bipartisanship, which becomes less likely as the election gets closer

24 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Discussion:

What works to attract and keep workers on your operation?

What have you heard about the H-2A program?

25

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Thank you!

Any questions?

Dr. Margaret Jodlowski

jodlowski.1@osu.edu

(614) 688 - 2938

26

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Very few agricultural workers:

Year	# of farmworkers in Ohio
2014	3,200
2015	3,400
2016	3,000
2017	3,200
2018	3,600
2019	3,800
2020	3,500
2021	3,700
2022	3,600

27

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

27

---

---

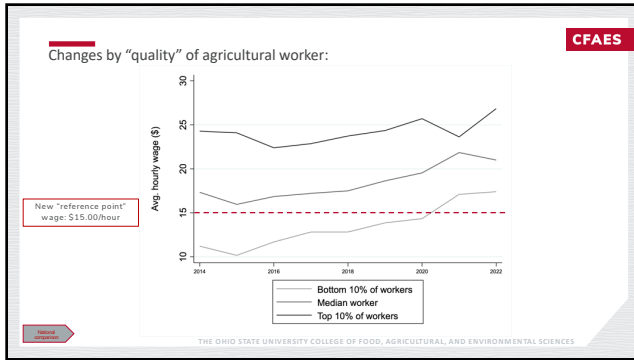
---

---

---

---

---



28

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## General labor market trends

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- General employment update: introduction
- Period of "balance" after disruptions of the pandemic and early post-pandemic years
    - Headwinds from inflation and tighter monetary policy
    - Sustainable, rather than reckless, growth in key employment figures
  - Evidence that job switching behavior is moderating
  - Nominal wage growth is moderating
    - Approaching their pre-pandemic levels
- THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

30

---

---

---

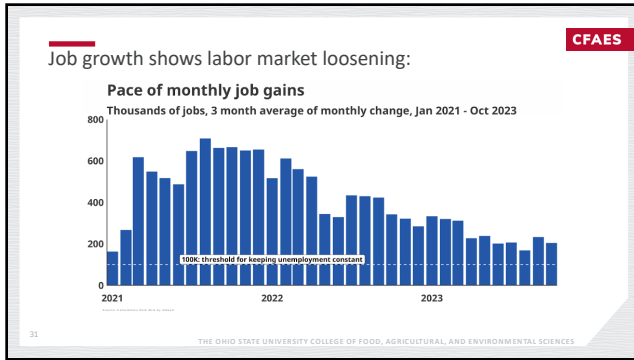
---

---

---

---

---



31

---

---

---

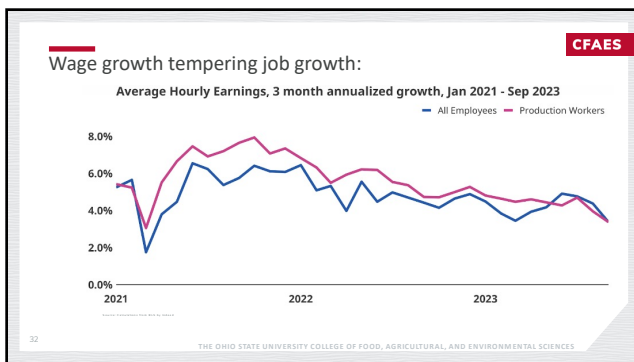
---

---

---

---

---



32

---

---

---

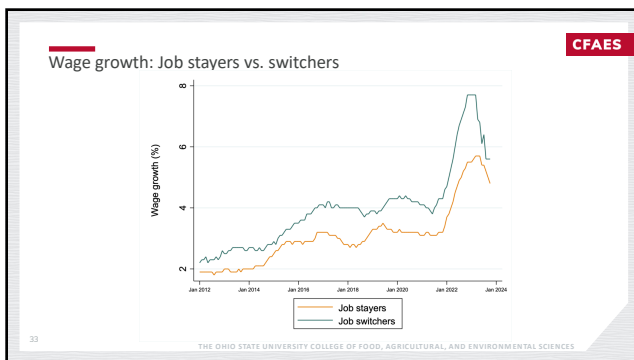
---

---

---

---

---



33

---

---

---

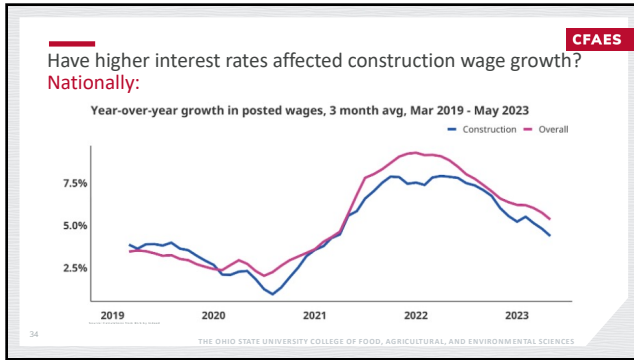
---

---

---

---

---



34

---

---

---

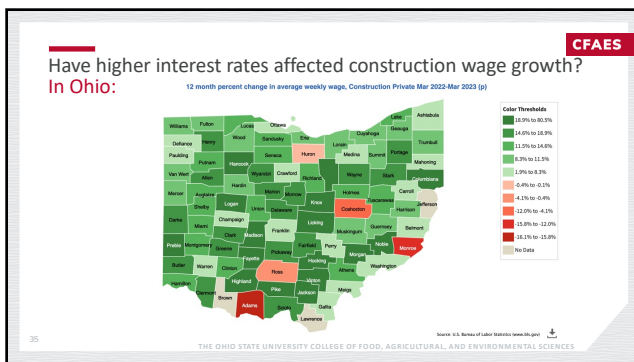
---

---

---

---

---



35

---

---

---

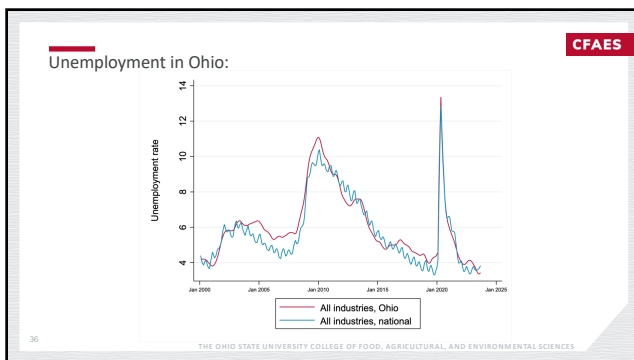
---

---

---

---

---



36

---

---

---

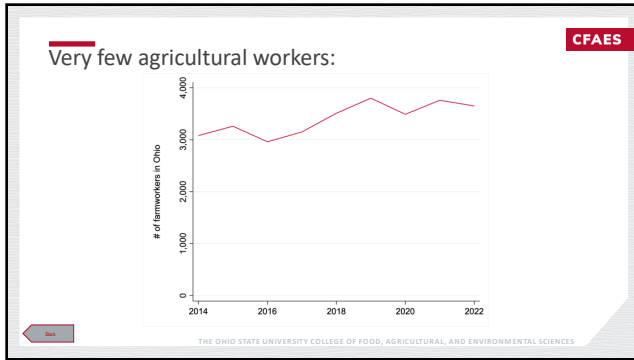
---

---

---

---

---



37

---

---

---

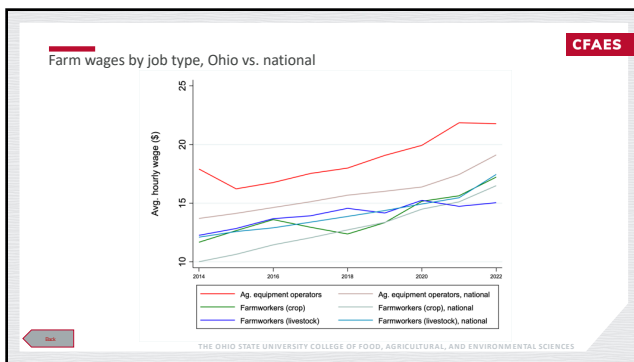
---

---

---

---

---



38

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Research question

Do workers with different legal statuses respond differently to changes in labor market conditions?

Is one legal status more responsive to changes in wages than another?

Ultimately:

Do workers change their labor market behavior when their legal status changes?

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

39

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### About the data:

- Data are from the National Agricultural Worker Survey
  - Random sample of farmworkers
  - Interviewed at workplace and not at home
- Who is surveyed?
  - Crop workers
  - Currently employed
  - Survey timing designed to capture migrant/seasonal workers
- Who is not surveyed?
  - H-2A visa workers
  - Workers not currently working in agriculture

CFAES

40

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

---

---

---

---

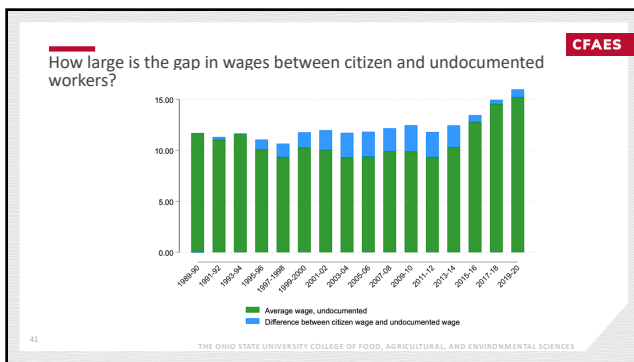
---

---

---

---

40




---

---

---

---

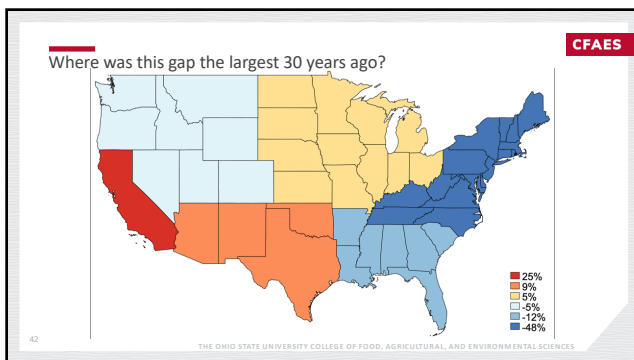
---

---

---

---

41




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

42



---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---



---

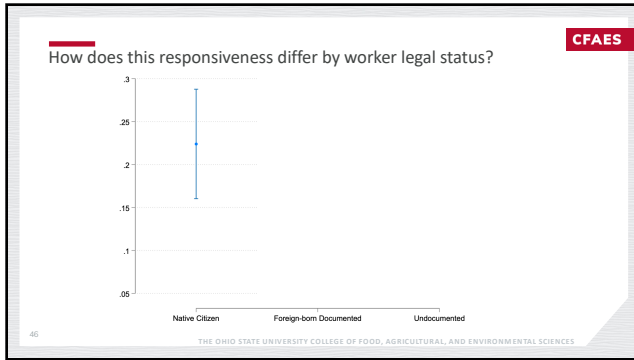
---

---

---

---

---



46

---

---

---

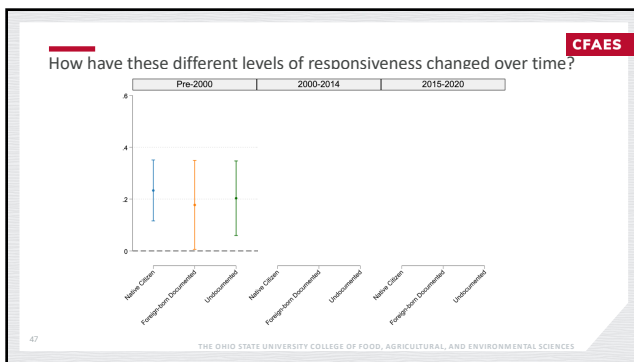
---

---

---

---

---



47

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**CFAES**

**Policy Implications:**

- Evidence that policies designed to provide a path to legalization effectively move would increase workers' responsiveness to wages
- Such a policy would have limited labor supply impacts in the middle period of our sample
  - Low labor supply response from immigrant workers in this period
  - Marked by the largest gaps between citizen and undocumented wages
- Given the relative wage levels, possible that such a policy would increase wage bill but may help to attract and retain workers

48 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

48

---

---

---

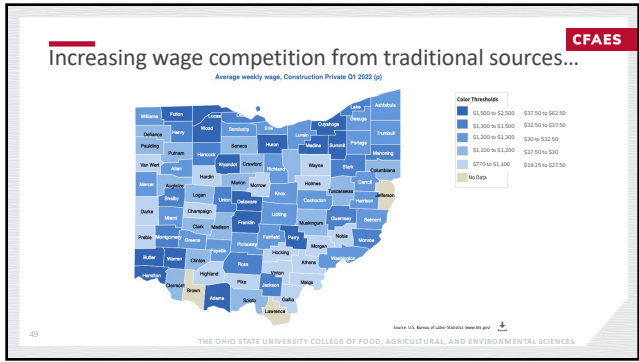
---

---

---

---

---



49

---

---

---

---

---

---

---