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For Immediate Release

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NCAE Meets with Mexican Embassy on COVID Vaccinations

(Washington, D.C.) The National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE) recently met with officials at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., to discuss vaccination issues impacting agricultural workers traveling to the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a regulation effective January 22, 2022, requiring individuals, including essential H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers, to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to transit into the U.S. Mexico is the largest provider of H-2A to U.S. farms and ranches.

“We have heard iterative reports from our members of the difficulties they are having locating potential workers in Mexico who have been vaccinated with an appropriate CDC/WHO approved vaccine,” noted Michael Marsh, President and CEO of NCAE. “There are challenges for American farmers and ranchers with the Biden Administration’s recent requirement that essential workers seeking to transit to temporary seasonal agricultural jobs in the U.S. must provide proof of being fully vaccinated with a CDC/WHO approved vaccine. It appears, based on reports from our members, that provision of non-CDC/WHO approved vaccines was ubiquitous in rural agricultural areas of Mexico from where many temporary H-2A workers are recruited.”

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Last fiscal year, more than 258,000 temporary foreign workers received H-2A visas to fill the more than 317,000 farm and ranch jobs for which no qualified, willing, and available domestic workers could be recruited. This set a record both in the number of jobs certified and visas issued. Data released this morning by the U.S. Department of Labor DOL reflect a 22.1% increase in the number of petitions received in the first quarter of FY 2022 over FY 2021. Approved positions were up 5.5% according to the DOL report.

According to Marsh, “The officials at the Mexican Embassy are very concerned regarding any disruption in the flow of Temporary H-2A Agricultural Workers coming into the United States. They recognize the remittances these essential workers bring home with them transform the workers’ communities. This financial flow can allow the returning workers to build homes and send their children to school, dramatically improving lives in rural Mexico.”

“The Government of Mexico is interested in assuring that a shortage of available essential workers does not hinder this beneficial relationship and agreed to continue sharing information with NCAE in a collaborative approach,” said Marsh

NCAE is the national trade association focusing on agricultural labor issues from the employer’s viewpoint.

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