

This is a paper from GEOG 2760: Rural Geography. In the paper in, *red italicized font*, there are “Tutor Tips” that give advice or tips to consider when writing a paper in Geography.

The Need for Care of Vermont Migrant Dairy Farm Workers

[Tutor Tip: Have a strong title to inform your readers of the topic of your paper]

Introduction

[Tutor Tip: In a paper with multiple parts, it can be helpful to include subheadings.]

Migrant workers on dairy farms in Vermont have been an important part of the economy for many years, but what are farm owners and the state of Vermont doing to ensure the health and safety of these marginalized workers? *[Tutor Tip: Get your readers engaged with an interesting opening sentence.]* Dairy farms in Vermont contribute to over 70% of agricultural sales for the state (Panikkar & Barrett, 2021). During the 2008 recession, farm owners were losing an average of \$90,000 per farm and needed to find a way to reduce their labor costs and undocumented migrant workers served as an answer to this problem (Smith, 2020). *[In APA citation, which is commonly used in geography, you put (author, year) for in-text citations. If you are using a direct quote, you would also include the page number after the year.]* There are estimated to be 1,500 Latinx migrant dairy farm workers on over two-thirds of dairy farms in the state of Vermont (Smith, 2020). Multiple studies over the years have shown that undocumented migrant workers have been treated unfairly and put in hazardous working conditions with little to no support. **If Vermont is going to continue to rely on migrant farm workers on dairy farms to contribute to the workforce of one of their most prominent leaders in agricultural sales, then more needs to be done to protect their health and safety in all aspects of their lives.** *[Tutor Tip: Thesis sentence at the end of your introduction that tells the reader your main argument of the paper.]*

Literature Review

[Tutor Tip: A literature review should be where you situate your project in the context of past research published on the topic.]

Harm Exposures of Migrant Dairy Farm Workers

Three studies were conducted in 2009, 2011, and 2021 to evaluate the health of Latinx dairy farm workers and assess the barriers they encounter in their access to care. The first two studies looked at responses from 120 migrant farm workers on 59 farms. Even though 87.1% of these workers said they felt “very healthy,” it became clear that their standards for “health” were relative to their ability to continue working (Baker & Chappelle, 2012, 281). When asked about specific ailments, some of the workers reported serious health issues. Ten percent said that they had rashes/skin problems, 14.3% had back or neck pains, 12.9% had toothaches or dental issues, and 12.9% were experiencing depression or anxiety (Baker & Chappelle, 2012, 281). In tandem with these physical and mental health issues, a substantial portion (75.5%) of the respondents said they had not received health care since coming to Vermont (Baker & Chappelle, 2012). The workers explained that the main barriers to receiving health care were fear of encountering immigration law enforcement, language barriers, and lack of transportation (Baker & Chappelle, 2012).

The most recent study conducted in 2021 concluded that migrant workers on dairy farms in Vermont received poor safety and health training. However, the most striking finding of this study was the harmful exposures migrant workers had to encounter on a daily basis. Chlorine, iodine, acid, formaldehyde, and pesticides are some of the chemicals migrant workers are routinely exposed to (Panikkar & Barrett, 2021). Workers reported feeling side effects ranging from dizziness, vomiting, and nausea, to nosebleeds from exposure to formaldehyde (Panikkar &

Barrett, 2021). In addition to exposure, three-fourths of the workers never had any training on the use of chemicals or chemical safety, 45% said they received training on how to operate the machinery, and only 50% reported having some form of training on animal safety (Panikkar & Barrett, 2021). On top of the sheer lack of safety training, the little training workers did receive was often conducted in English with no translation services or by co-workers who were not compensated for their time (Panikkar & Barrett, 2021). These three studies demonstrate some of the main issues facing Vermont dairy migrant workers such as poor access to health care, dangerous working conditions, and a lack of access to proper safety training. In response to these conditions, some people have started to organize for more protection of these essential workers.

The Work of Migrant Justice

Migrant Justice is an agency that was formed outside of state power to facilitate resources for Latinx farm workers on Vermont dairy farms. After the tragic death of migrant worker, José Obeth Santiz Cruz in 2009, some Vermonters met with Latinx farm workers to help return his body home to his family (Thompson, 2021). This death shined a light on the injustices and hazardous working conditions that were happening on dairy farms that many Vermonters were not aware of (Thompson, 2021). This tragedy brought both migrant workers and Vermonters together to create Migrant Justice, which aimed to make migrant farm workers more visible among Vermonters and to build a stronger sense of community with the long-term Vermonters and the newer migrant workers (Thompson, 2021).

Most workers saw that the greatest achievement for Migrant Justice was the approval of Bill S.238. This bill allowed migrant farm workers to apply for driver's privilege cards, regardless of their legal status, thus allowing them to have more freedom and self-reliance (Thompson, 2021). Migrant Justice also developed a Spanish-language hotline called *Teleayuda*

where farm workers could report community violations of labor and human rights (Thompson, 2021). The formation and evolution of Migrant Justice has been instrumental in building community and creating programs that give migrant dairy farm workers the freedom and ability to fight for better working and living conditions.

Case Study

[Tutor Tip: In a case study you are focusing on article or event to dissect further.]

The Importance of the Care Center

The Care Center is one of the few resources that have programs specifically for migrant farm workers in Vermont to access healthcare in a safe and affordable way. Founded in 1990 and located in Cherry Country, Vermont, the Care Center is a free healthcare clinic that serves uninsured and underinsured patients. In 2009 the Care Clinic received a federal grant that allowed them to care for migrant farmworkers who comprise about 60% of their patient population (Smith, 2020). At the Care Clinic, patients can receive general physical exams, mental health counseling, and food donations (Smith, 2020). A study conducted at the Care Clinic described the complicated relationship between Care Clinic workers, farm owners, and migrant farm workers, thus proving the importance of places such as the Care Clinic to keep Vermont's need for migrant farm workers sustainable (Smith, 2020).

Like the migrant dairy farm workers, the Care Center workers have to deal with the stress and uncertainty of their jobs. The funding for the Care Center is yearly-based and none of it is guaranteed, which requires workers at the Center to fundraise and write grants as full-time jobs (Smith, 2020). Despite the fact that the state of Vermont is aware of the need for migrant workers and the needs of healthcare for migrant workers and therefore relies on the clinic to maintain those needs, it only provides about 25% of the clinic's overall budget (Smith, 2020).

The workers of the Care Clinic also have to deal with the precarious relationship with the local farm workers. Nurses say most of the time they have to remain neutral about the working conditions that they see because, without the trust of the farm owners, they would lose their access to the migrant workers even though these conditions are some of the main reasons they need to be brought to the clinic in the first place (Smith, 2020). Typically, the best they can do is refer them to agencies like Migrant Justice in hopes they can gain help from outside resources. Working on dairy farms can be incredibly dangerous considering workers must handle live animals, large machinery, and toxic chemicals on a daily basis (Smith, 2020). The Care Center is one of the only places migrant workers in Vermont are able to go for medical care without fear of deportation or the inability to pay for their health services.

Discussion

[Tutor Tip: In the conclusion/discussion, you want to restate your main argument (thesis statement) and you can also include some "next steps" of what you think needs to be done to solve the problem.]

Very little has been done to mediate the problem of ensuring the health and safety of migrant farm workers on dairy farms in Vermont. More places like the Care Center need to be created to give migrant farm workers additional opportunities to have access to care. Dairy farms in Vermont that employ migrant workers need to have enforced protocols and rules to make sure their workers are being treated fairly and working in a safe environment. Farm owners need to do a better job of learning Spanish or have more opportunities for migrant workers to learn English. The language barriers have proven to be a safety hazard as many migrant workers said they do not fully understand the hazards of the chemicals they work with or did not get appropriate training in the large machinery they use. If the state of Vermont relies on these migrant farm

workers to contribute to a large portion of their economy, then they need to do better at returning the favor and making sure they are being treated fairly with safe working conditions. Migrant farm workers have been forced to live in the shadow of Vermont for a very long time and it is past time to start talking about their needs and rights as people and members of this community.

References

[Tutor Tip: References are on a separate page and in alphabetical order by author's last name.]

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