



**CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE**

## **Agricultural Ethics for a Global Generation**

### **Dignity of Work in Fields and Food Processing**

The work conditions and living situation of farmworkers have long been a concern of the Church. They are among the most vulnerable and exploited people in our land. Their demeaning situation demands a response from people of faith.

Besides workers in the fields, there are millions of more workers in food processing, distribution and food services – and who receive such low wages that they must work long hours or take two jobs to make a minimal living.

A living wage for agricultural and food workers could help them and their families live a just and decent life, help to stabilize the workforce, and stimulate rural and low-income communities without significantly impacting food prices.

Since most benefits generally are not available to these workers as part of an employment package, federal and state laws should be amended to ensure that all workers are entitled to health care, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and Social Security.

Farm workers and migrant laborers must be treated with dignity. Whether employed in meat processing, vegetable and fruit fields, dairy farms, poultry houses, or hog confinement operations, many immigrant laborers are ill-housed, poorly paid, threatened and vulnerable.

In the view of the Church, all agricultural workers are entitled to safe working conditions, adequate housing, and benefits for themselves and their families. This is paramount; it deserves the support and affirmation of the community and the nation.

*And he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' (Matthew 20:4)*