less hours and do you want to work more/less days off?", about 80 percent were content with the hours worked and days off.

Wages/Benefits. Tables 1 and 2 show what the current wages are in Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties. On average the native workers are making more money than the Hispanic workers; this is primarily due to the fact that Hispanics are in the "starting" jobs on the farm (milking). When looking at just milkers, over 25 percent are making above \$10/hour.

Table 1: Current Employee Income (All Employees)

	Immigrant	Native
	%	
\$7-\$8	7	7
\$8-\$9	30	4
\$9-\$10	33	6
\$10-\$11	20	29
\$11-\$12	7	18
\$12 plus	3	35

Table 2: Milker Income

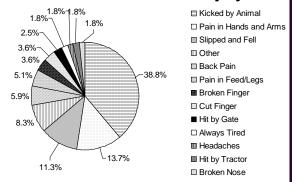
\$7-\$8	10.4%
\$8-\$9	31.8%
\$9-\$10	31.2%
\$10-\$11	20.2%
\$11-\$12	3.5%
\$12 plus	2.9%

Training/ Safety. When asked whether they had received training, 35 percent of employees said they had received no training. Of the 65 percent of employees that had received training, 14.5 percent had less than two days, 14.8 percent had 2-4 days, 19 percent had four-six days, and 14.2 percent had more than six days. For employees, job advancement is important. Over 66 percent would like more training for job advancement.

On many farms, safety is not always a priority. This has been true in agriculture for

a long time. When we asked employees, 30 percent said they have had injuries in the workplace. Chart 13 lays out the different injuries that were reported by employees. These are some of the first numbers on injuries in the work place on dairy farms that I could find. I don't know if they are high as compared to the rest of dairy industry or typical. Some of these injuries are likely not serious but they do raise the question of what is acceptable and what is preventable.

Chart 13: What Kind of Injury?



#### The Big Picture

What is in the future for these employees? We did not ask the legal status (documented vs. undocumented) of the Hispanic workers; this was not the goal of this study. But it would seem likely that changing national immigration policies would affect many of these employees and their employers. The fact is 78 percent of the Hispanic workers arrive at work in their own car but only 44 percent have a driver's license, has policy implications on all government levels. These are issues that will need to be addressed over the next few years.

#### **Final Comments**

A study that included this many farms and this many employees would not have been possible without their cooperation. Thankyou for your help. It is very much appreciated. Any questions let me know.

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, the University of Wisconsin provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.



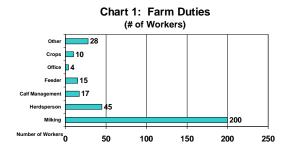
# **DAIRY EMPLOYEE SURVEY - 2007**

Paul Dyk, UW-Extension Fond du Lac County

Driving around the eastern half of Wisconsin it is very clear the dairy industry is changing. No one is building a tiestall barn and there are almost no vertical silos being built. On the farm, life is changing as well. The dairy producer's role is changing. Whereas a producer at one time did all the manual labor on the farm himself, now he spends more of his time managing employees.

There have been a few studies that have looked at these changes on dairy farms, but almost all have come from the employer's perspective. This past summer (2007), I wanted to look more closely at these changes from the employee level. Collaborators on the project included Jill Harrison from the University of Wisconsin Department of Rural Sociology (UW), Tina Kohlman (UW-Extension Sheboygan County), and Brent Valentine (moderator & chief information surveyor). We wanted to look at the demographics, goals, and working conditions of employees on dairy farms in this part of the state.

Over a couple of months, Brent visited **34 dairies** and interviewed **309 employees** in Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties. Brent's bilingual ability allowed him to interview both Spanish and English speaking employees. Brent attempted to interview all employees on each of the farms visited. Chart 1 shows the various job descriptions of these employees; by far, most of these workers were milkers/cow pushers. **So what did we find?** 



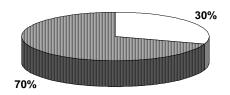
Looking at Charts 2 through 4, we can see some clear demographics of this group.

About 70 percent of the employees on these

farms were Hispanic, and 87 percent were male. For those who have been watching the industry over the last few years the shift to Hispanic employees has been very apparent. The agribusiness community has adapted to this change through bilingual literature and labels. This survey is one of the first to actually put a number on the impact of this Hispanic labor.

Looking at the origins of the farm workers

### Chart 2: Who are the Workers?



☐ Native Ⅲ Immigrant

## **Chart 3: Workers by Gender**

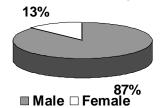
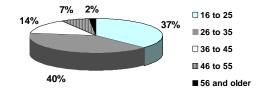


Chart 4: Workers by Age



(Charts 5 and 6), it becomes quite apparent beyond Wisconsin, Mexico is the primary origin of many of these workers. Even more interesting is when one looks at the state/ province of origin, Veracruz is the primary origin. And we can go farther than that.



For more information,

Dairy & Livestock Agent

paul.dyk@ces.uwex.edu

please contact:

**UW-Extension** 

(920) 929-3171

Fond du Lac County

Paul Dyk

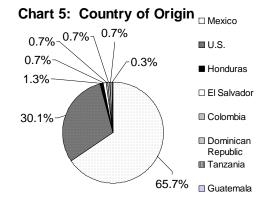
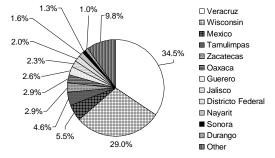


Chart 6: Province of Origin



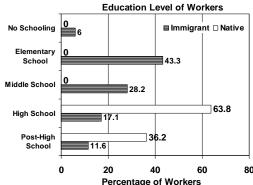
When interviewing the employees, there were about 25 percent of the Hispanic employees from a handful of villages in one region of Veracruz. So it's safe to conclude that many of these employees know each other from Mexico. How has this happened? When we looked at how workers found their jobs, 86 percent said they had been recommended by a family member or friend, nine percent walked on the farm, four percent responded to a job advertisement and one percent were hired through an employment agency. What essentially has happened is this. An employer hires a new employee. He/she is reliable. A different employee leaves. The newest employee brings along a friend or family member to fill the position. This has been repeated over the last ten years within individual farms and across farms in Eastern Wisconsin.

The reliability and availability of Hispanic workforce has driven the demographics of farm labor to change drastically. Over 42 percent of the farms in this survey reported they began employing Hispanic workers between 1996 and 2000 (seven percent between 1991 and 1996, 45 percent between And what were the goals of these immigrants? When asked this question, 19 percent said they wanted to stay as long as possible and 79 percent said they wanted to work and return to their home country.

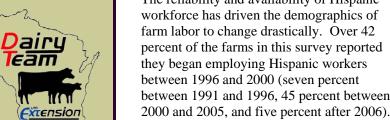
### Other key demographics

**Education levels.** There is quite a difference in the educational levels between Immigrant (Hispanic) and Native (English Speaking) workers. In Chart 7, the educational differences can easily be seen. About 63 percent of the Native workers had started or completed high school and 37 percent had

Chart 7: Who are the Workers?



some educational training beyond high school. For Hispanic workers, six percent had no schooling while another 43 percent had only completed or started primary (onesix) school. Of the Hispanic workers, 17 percent had started or completed high school (Prepa) while 12 percent had some post high school training. Why does this matter? We asked this question primarily to understand the educational levels and perhaps the literacy levels of the Hispanic workers. Literacy is not really a question that can be asked directly. Many of our training programs, literature, and oral communication on farms assume a certain amount of literacy and education. A great example of this is the translation of popular trade magazines into Spanish. Can someone with a 6th grade education level or less, have the educational background to understand concepts like Ovsynch and fresh cow protocols? When I was in fifth grade I am not sure what level my vocabulary was at. I am pretty sure I wouldn't understand the terms "esophageal feeder" and "rumen canula". I am not sure

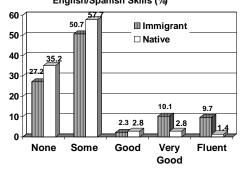




many of these magazines have really understood their audience. (This is the basis for the Dairy Partner/El Compañero newsletter I put out; I keep the articles short and full of pictures.) Does this mean these employees are "dumb"? Certainly not!! Many of these employees simply have not had the educational opportunities to utilize their intelligence. The key is to try and understand the individual employees. Realize their potential and limitations. Train accordingly.

English/Spanish Speaking skills. In Chart 8 we can see 20 percent of the Hispanic workers consider themselves very good or fluent in English while 4.2 percent of Native workers consider themselves fluent or very good in Spanish. About 37 percent of the Hispanic workers have taken English classes while about 90 percent would like to take English classes. For English speaking employees, 25 percent have taken Spanish classes and 56 percent would like to take classes in the future.

Chart 8: Language Skills English/Spanish Skills (%)



**Employee Turnover.** Looking at Chart 9 we can see over 45 percent of employees (Hispanic and Native) have been on their current farm for more than 2.5 years. From the chart its also quite apparent the non-Hispanic employees have been on the farm longer than ten years. As mentioned earlier, this is due to the fact most employers only started hiring Hispanics in the last ten years.

Another common question is whether or not employees are jumping from farm to farm. In Chart 10 we can see almost 80 percent of

Chart 9: Distribution of Years with Current Farm

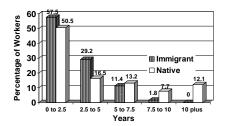
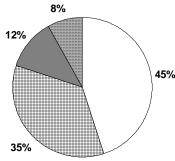


Chart 10: How Many Dairies Have You Worked on in the Past?



□ 0 Farms ■ 1 Farm ■ 2 Farms ■ 3 plus Farms

employees have been employed on only one or two dairies.

**Hours Worked / Time off.** Charts 11 and 12 show the number of hours worked by employees and the number of days off per month. Many of the farm laborers are working long hours and without a lot of days off. This of course is compared to the nonagricultural community; those in agriculture know this has been true for many years. When asked, "Do you want to work more/

Chart 11: Hours Worked per Week

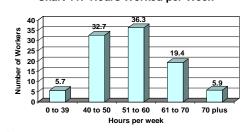
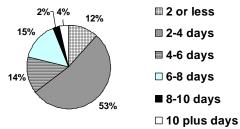


Chart 12: Number of Days Off Per Month



© 2008 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin, doing business as the Division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension.