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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Another Wafila First: Chartered Flights for Workers

First chartered flights transporting H-2A seasonal workers from Mexico land at SeaTac

Seattle, June 19, 2017: Wafila is pleased to welcome the first two groups of H-2A seasonal farm workers to Washington by chartered plane. In a 'year of firsts,' wafila was the first association to employ commercial flights for the H-2A legal worker program, the first to recruit farm workers from El Salvador, and now the first to charter planes for farm workers.



The H-2A legal worker program requires employers to arrange or reimburse the least expensive "common carrier" transport from the worker's home. And although a chartered bus is a huge improvement compared to traditional means of travel for farm workers, a bus from southern Mexico to the Pacific Northwest is a grueling trip that lasts upward of 44 hours. Wafila member farmers are seeking safer and more comfortable alternatives for workers.

Wafila welcomed its first chartered flights on Wednesday and Friday last week, approximately 165 workers on each flight. Workers flew into Sea-Tac airport in the morning before traveling to work sites in Oregon and Washington by chartered buses. This year, wafila anticipates requesting labor certifications for 10,000 farm worker positions in the northwest.

"Farmers in the northwest are super innovative," said wafila CEO Dan Fazio. "They have embraced the legal worker program and they are demanding that our association innovate whenever possible."

Our goal is to bring 25,000 legal farm workers to Washington, Oregon, and Idaho each year in the near future, and that will take 21st century solutions to the logistics issue.

The Trump administration is challenging growers to make a case for the H-2A legal worker program. Growers in the northwest are answering that challenge. The apple crop in Washington alone is worth more than \$2 billion, with other labor intensive crops such as nurseries, vegetables, and vineyards adding that much or more to our economy. H-2A is a well-regulated federal and state program offering high wages and superior working conditions for all workers – foreign and domestic. Wafila will release a full report detailing the economic benefits of H-2A in Washington this July.

For Immediate Release

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Wafila is a non-profit agriculture association that provides labor and employment advice for its more than 700 members in the pacific northwest. We are committed to making the processes of the H-2A legal worker program better for both growers and workers. Flying workers directly into Washington will help to ensure that workers get to their work sites more efficiently, safer and on time. We are hoping to continue with more flights in the future.

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