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## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Economic Contributions of H-2A**

***Wafila Releases Study on Benefits of H-2A in Washington***

**Olympia, August 9, 2017:** A study prepared for wafila by ECONorthwest finds that H-2A workers generated \$619 million in economic activity for the tree fruit industry in 2015. In that year, Washington farmers received visas for 11,844 workers through the H-2A legal worker program. In 2017, that number has increased 31.8 percent, with a proportional increase in economic contribution. The study demonstrates the economic importance of H-2A workers to the Washington economy in light of well documented labor shortages.

Wafila CEO Dan Fazio, "The H-2A program benefits all workers, foreign and domestic, through higher wages, free housing, and stringent work regulations. The Trump administration asked us to make the business case for this program, and this study answers that challenge. We look forward to working with the Administration and elected officials from both parties to increase access to this great program."

Farmers who enter the H-2A program agree to pay a minimum wage of \$13.38 per hour to all workers, nearly 22 percent higher than farmers who don't use the program. In addition, the farmers agree to stringent regulations, including hiring all qualified domestic workers and providing free housing and transportation to workers who need it. In exchange, these farmers are allowed to petition for visas for foreign workers if there are insufficient numbers of domestic workers.

Fazio continues, "The H-2A legal worker program is expensive and filled with red tape, but farmers have embraced it because it is the right thing to do. The farmers achieve a stable workforce, and workers receive the dignity of legal presence." Access report: <http://bit.ly/ECONorthwest>

Thanks to study sponsors: Washington State Tree Fruit Association, Washington Farm Bureau, Stoel Rives LLP, Moss-Adams LLP, and the Washington Policy Center. **END**

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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.*

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