

MAPPING THE CURRENT NEEDS OF THE CITRUS INDUSTRY REGARDING LABOUR MIGRATION

OBJECTIVE:

Focus on importance of Labour Migration and develop Strategic Roadmap & Workplan for continued viability of the Citrus Industry.

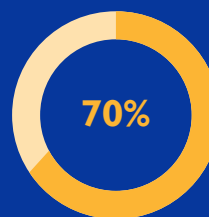
BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:

Belize's export agricultural sector, Sugar, Citrus and Bananas have always been a dominant source of foreign exchange earnings and employment. With collapse of Tourism due to Covid, the export agriculture sector has once again become the most important source of foreign exchange and employment in the country.

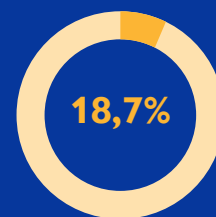
Historical combination of push and pull factors including geo-political reasons and perception of land availability in Belize caused influx of migrants into the country. **It is estimated that about 62,000 international migrants are in Belize, of which 49.7 per cent are females (UN DESA, 2020).**

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New migrants found work in agriculture and other sectors where a combination of existing factors such as porosity of national borders, lax immigration enforcement and continued low wages in agriculture account for the persistence of migrant workers in export agricultural industries. **Over 70 percent of the workers in the citrus industry are migrants. The LFS 2020 indicates that migrants make up 18.7 percent of the labour force.**



Of the workers in the citrus industry are migrants



total of migrants in the labour force

MAIN FINDINGS:

> Most recent production data show a Citrus Industry in decline evidenced by old, abandoned groves, reduction in harvestable acreages, impacts of citrus diseases. This just concluded crop year show production at its lowest ever levels. Earnings are also at their lowest ever.

> Citrus industry continues to be dependent on migrant workers for a broad range of low level tasks, notably harvesting. **Losses were reported as a direct result of lack of migrant labour for harvesting.**

> Strategies for industry recovery such as replantings, introduction of new disease resistant varieties and greater efficiencies at the harvesting level will necessitate continued dependence on migrant workers.

> Need to respect fundamental labour and residency rights of migrant workers (ILO compliant).



RECOMMENDATION: STRATEGIC ROADMAP & WORKPLAN:

> Focus on a theory of change whereby there is a **“whole of government”** approach to address all migrant workers related issues in an ethical and sustainable manner using an international best practices approach.

> International best practices include a Belizeanized adoption of IRIS Standards and CREST. Public recognition for compliant companies and grower organizations to facilitate recruitment.

> Need for enhanced collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders, including GOB, Citrus interests, UN agencies, embassies of migrant worker countries and migrant worker organizations in what is known as **“whole of society approach”**.

> Such enhanced collaboration will provide a predictable flow of benefits to all stakeholders: Enhanced revenues to GOB, greater workforce stability to employers and for migrants a greater recognition of their labour rights and pathway to a more **regularized** immigration status.

