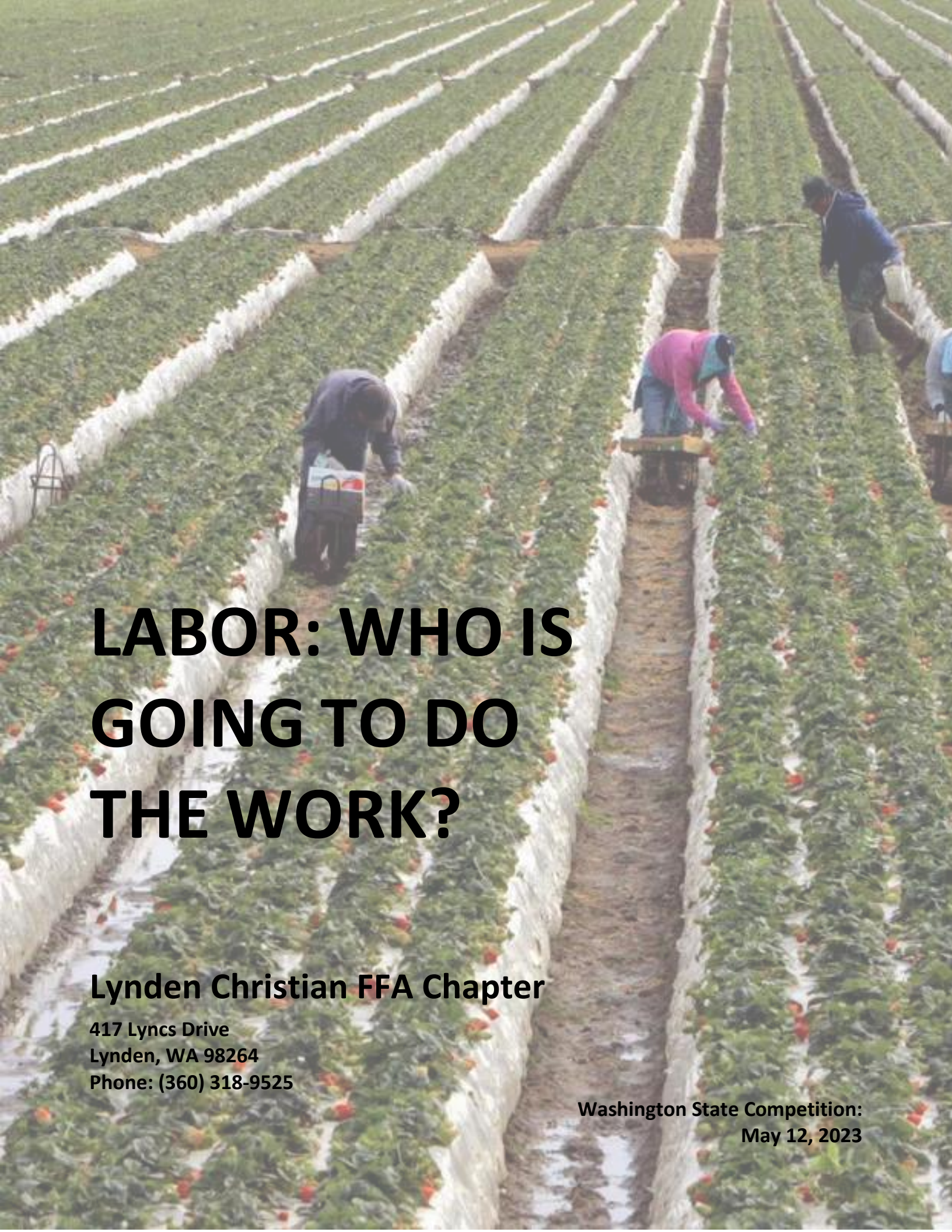




LABOR: WHO IS GOING TO DO THE WORK?

Lynden Christian FFA Chapter

417 Lyncs Drive

Lynden, WA 98264

Phone: (360) 318-9525

**Washington State Competition:
May 12, 2023**

ISSUE SUMMARY:

List course(s) in which instruction occurred including the number of students involved in the instruction of the issue.

- Introduction to Agriculture (12 students) – Introduces students to the overarching issues facing the agricultural industry today, including labor shortages and possible solutions to include the advancements of technology in the agricultural sector.
- Business Management (15 students) – Covers the importance of the economic impact labor and mechanization upkeep have on profit flow and costs of production.
- Introduction to Horticulture (27 students) – Familiarizes students with possible careers in the agricultural industry, the concepts of obtaining and maintaining a job, applying for work in the agricultural sector, as well as the hard work involved in planting, harvesting, and marketing agricultural products.

What is the nature of the issue and why is this issue important now?

The physically demanding nature of agricultural jobs, fewer Americans growing up and staying on farms, and the necessity of hand labor to pick and process many crops, demands a consistent and plentiful labor supply within the U.S. (Agriculture Labor Reform, n.d.). That consistent and plentiful labor supply is becoming increasingly difficult to find. It is estimated that U.S. agriculture requires anywhere from 1.5 million to 2 million hired workers to keep agricultural production moving (Economic Impact of Immigration, n.d.). With a current population of approximately 7.7 billion and the projected population to reach 10.9 billion by the year 2050, the need to feed people is an ever-growing concern. (Cilluffo & Ruiz, 2021). The inability to secure a reliable labor force to harvest and process food will result in greater waste, higher imports, and less food security. The U.S. is facing an unpredictable global market, food scarcity and challenging economic future (Ferguson, 2022). Many issues result from an unreliable and unregulated labor force. It is estimated that anywhere from half to two-thirds of farm laborers are working without legal documentation, making them vulnerable to deportation (Rouse et al., 2021). Exploitation with low wages, poor housing conditions and a lack of support from employers and community can also develop (Estabrook, 2019). The need for food is not diminishing, however the labor needed to produce that food is constantly under siege. That begs the questions, with an industry reliant on labor, where will that labor come from?

Who is involved in the issue?

There are innumerable players involved in this debate. Every person in the United States, as well as the world, has a stake in this issue. We are a country dependent on labor to produce our food. This makes every person vulnerable to shortages in production. Specific key players that are directly affected include American farmers and ranchers who need employees to work fields, plant, harvest and process crops and work with livestock. Undocumented immigrants also have a vested interest in this issue as they make up fifty to seventy-five percent of the present labor force working in agriculture (Rouse et al., 2021). Policy makers, immigrant advocates and agriculture associations all play a vital role in securing a U.S. labor force. Another segment directly affected by the evolving agricultural industry is technology. Mechanization, automation, and robotics will continue to play a dominant role in our capability of meeting the increasing worldwide demand for food (Bedord, 2021).

How can this issue be defined?

The issue of agricultural labor can be defined by one question: Who is going to do the work? This forum falls primarily under the topic area of “Agricultural Policy Issues” as listed in the *Focusing on Agricultural Issues* instructional materials. We chose to look at this question by researching the perspective of the farmer first and foremost. Insights are offered from a Farm Bureau representative, an agricultural engineer, informal labor contractor, an economist, a labor advocate and a federal policy maker all who are involved with the issue. A labor shortage is a detriment to all. Results of a labor shortage can include such issues as food insecurity and possible waste as crops are left in fields, as well as increased production costs and the inability to feed a growing population (Castellanos-Canales, 2022). However, labor shortages also offer a means of jump-starting innovation in the areas of technology and mechanization in agriculture (Bedord, 2021). It’s an opportunity to fix a broken immigration system and redefine the path forward for all those involved in this complex issue (Rouse et al., 2021).

What is the historical background of the issue?

Significant dates regarding the history of labor in the United States:

- **1870s:** The use of seasonal groups of laborers was first noted in California where employers relied heavily on Chinese immigrants and were later replaced by Japanese and then Mexican workers (Bramen, 2009).

ISSUE SUMMARY:

- **1875:** The Supreme Court ruled that regulating immigration was a federal responsibility (*Immigration History - Timeline* 2020).
- **1900:** The U.S. population was approximately 76 million people, and about 12 million of those had jobs in agriculture in direct on farm employment, or 16.6 % of the population.
- **1942-1964:** The United States signed multiple diplomatic accords with Mexico that brought millions of Mexican immigrants to the United States to work on short-term agricultural labor contracts. This was called the Bracero Program. 4.6 million contracts were signed under the Bracero Program, making it the largest U.S. contract labor program to date (*U.S. immigration before 1965*, 2021).
- **1952:** Legislation was passed called the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that ended racial restrictions on citizenship and expanded immigration enforcement. The INA of 1952 also created a nonimmigrant visa category known as H-2, permitting the recruitment of foreign farmworkers (*Overview of INS History*, 2012).
- **1965:** The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) was revised, and new laws were enacted that ended the quota system favoring the immigration of Europeans. As a result of this act, the nation shifted its immigration pattern to that of what we see today, many of the U.S. immigrants coming from Asia and Latin America. (*U.S. immigration before 1965*, 2021)
- **1986:** The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) divided immigrant workers into categories based on the class of work being performed and expanded the guest worker visa programs (*Immigration History - Timeline* 2020).
- **1996, 2002, and 2006:** Laws were enacted in response to concerns regarding terrorism and unauthorized immigration. They emphasized border control and tightened admission eligibility (*Immigration History - Timeline* 2020).
- **2020:** Jobs certified to be filled by H2-A workers reached 275,000 with an estimated \$3.5 billion being paid out to guest worker of the program in 2020 (Castillo, 2022).
- **2021:** During 2021, 317,000 jobs were certified as seasonal farm jobs to be filled by H-2A workers, up 15% from 2020 (Castillo, 2022).
- **2021:** Direct on-farm employment accounted for 2.6 million jobs. Out of a population of 331 million, it means only 1.3% of U.S. citizens are employed directly on a farm (Kassel & Martin, 2023).
- **Today:** There are multiple pending policies, yet no bipartisan comprehensive plan to address the growing labor concerns and immigration issues that agriculturalist are facing every day (*Liberty campaign launches with 430+ business associations calling for border security, immigration reform* 2023).

What caused the issue?

Farm worker shortages continue to rise due to declining interest in working in agriculture, an aging agricultural population, and cumbersome immigration laws and guest worker programs. Agriculture is a labor-intensive industry, often requiring long hours, challenging work conditions, and sometimes lower wages than other industries which all create a lack of appeal in the job market. Agriculture is an essential industry that is commonly underappreciated by both the public and policy makers. Without a secure and reliable labor force in agriculture, production potential is limited, and food security is at risk. The need for labor and the policies that govern it have not undergone significant change in the past fifty years. Without quick and decisive action, we are rapidly approaching a tipping point where the need for workers will greatly affect the availability of a plentiful food supply, which could will create an unstable and unpredictable future for the country (Castellanos-Canales, 2022).

Is there strong disagreement on how the issue should be solved?

Yes. This issue is extremely complex and can be very divisive as it can challenge our personal views on economics, politics, farm practices, immigration, and regulations. The technology sector believes that mechanization is the overall answer to the labor shortage and yet farmers acknowledge that there will always be a great need for human labor in this industry. Also, technology can be too costly for many family farms to incorporate. Many labor advocates believe that a change in our immigration laws will relieve the labor pressure on our farms, but how are we going to keep our workers from moving away into other industries? Our political leaders think that more regulations are the fix, but nothing has truly changed in labor policy since The Immigration Reform and Control Act President Ronald Reagan put into place in 1986 (Rouse et al., 2021). Less than 2% of our population knows how to grow enough food to feed our citizens as well as many other countries in the world (Kassel & Martin, 2023). Despite the intense challenges that farmers have faced with the pandemic, inflation and a shortage of labor, they have continued to do their job of feeding this great country. The question on who is going to help them do the work in the future will define if farmers and ranchers will be able to continue to feed this country.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS:

Blok, Dale. Farm Owner-Manager Blok Dairy. Lynden, WA. January 26, 2023

DeJong, Jeffrey. Farm Owner- Manager Eagillmill Dairy. Lynden, WA. January 26, 2023.

Haugen, Kyle. Processing Plant Manager- Northwest Berry Coop. Lynden, WA. March 30, 2023.

Pawlowski, Kevin. President-Owner Farmers Equipment Dealership. Lynden, WA. February 9, 2023.

Shewmake, Sharon. Washington State Senator. February 1, 2023

Timmer, Jeffrey. Field Development and Maintenance Director- Enfield Farms. Lynden, WA. August 21, 2023

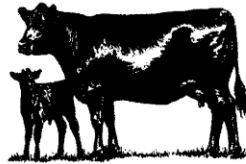


LOCAL FORUM PRESENTATIONS

WHEN	WHERE	TO WHOM	# PRESENT
March 15, 2023	Everson, WA	Whatcom Cattlemen's Association	18
March 16, 2023	Lynden, WA	Whatcom County Farm Bureau Board	7
March 21, 2023	Lynden, WA	Mount Baker Rotary	35
March 22, 2023	Lynden, WA	Lynden Breakfast Kiwanis	10
April 10, 2023	Lynden, WA	Whatcom County Dairy Women	10
April 12, 2023	Lynden, WA	Lynden Noon Kiwanis	13
April 12, 2023	Lynden, WA	Family Farms Board	11

Whatcom County Cattlemen's Association Forum 1

March 15, 2023



Whatcom County Cattlemen's Association
PO Box 836
Lynden, WA 98264

3/21/2023

Dear Lynden Christian High School Agriculture Issues Team,

The Whatcom County Cattlemen's Association would like to thank you for taking the time to come and present to our association about your project "Labor: Who is Going to do the Work". It was a great presentation and very informative on the complicated nature of the labor issues in the agriculture industry, and how the industry is facing and overcoming the issue. Meeting information as follows:

Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Everson Auction Market LLC
7291 Everson Goshen Road
Everson, WA 98247

In attendance: 18 members & 11 guests.

All the best,

Leah Richner
Secretary of WCCA
360-815-3862





03/31/2023

To Whom it May Concern:



On Thursday, March 16, 2023, the Lynden Christian High School Agricultural Issues Team presented to our club on their topic, "Labor: Who is Going to do the Work?" There were 7 members and guests in attendance at Rustler's Front Street Grill in Lynden, WA, from 11:38 am until 12:20 pm. Our members thoroughly enjoyed the topic and at the end asked questions and gave some advice for future presentations. It is clear immense effort and time has been put into this presentation and we especially liked the thoughtfulness behind even the minor details.

We wish you luck in your future endeavors, it's evident the members of this team are becoming great leaders. Again, thank you for presenting to our group and we look forward to hearing how you do at the state competition in May.

Sincerely,
Troy Lensen
President - Whatcom County Farm Bureau



March 27, 2023

To whom it may concern:

On Tuesday, March 14, 2023, the Lynden Christian High School Agricultural Issues Team presented to our club. Their well-presented topic was on "Labor: Who is Going to do the Work." There were about 35 members and guests in attendance at the Rotary Building, located in Lynden, WA, from noon until 1:30.

We enjoyed conversing with the team members during lunch. Their team did a great job presenting and answering a variety of questions. Their preparation and knowledge of the topic was well shown.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Corkill'.

Mark Corkill
President Elect
360-220-3583





Kiwanis

March 22, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Lynden Breakfast Kiwanis Club, I would like to take this opportunity to THANK the Lynden Christian FFA team for attending our early morning meeting and for their presentation of an outstanding and informative discussion on "Labor: Who is going to do the Work?"

The meeting took place March 22, 2023 at the Fairway Café in Lynden at 6:45 am, with 10 of our members in attendance. We thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and several of our members posed questions to the presenters who responded with well thought out answers.

We wish them well in any future presentations and competition they might face.

Sincerely,

Lee Mielke
Secretary-Lynden Breakfast Kiwanis Club
360-201-4033
lkmielke@juno.com



Whatcom County Dairy Women
PO Box 134
Lynden WA 98264

April 12, 2023

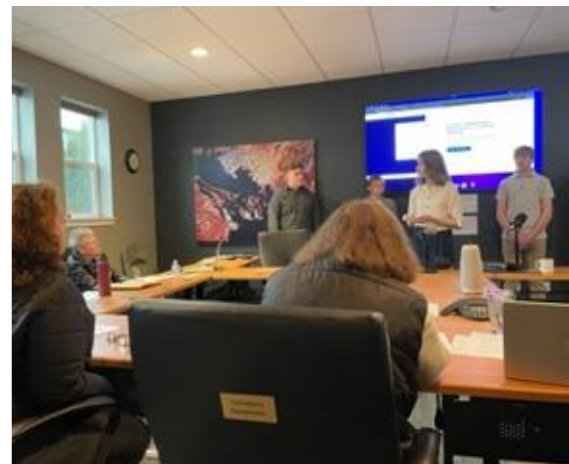
To Whom It May Concern: in

On Monday, April 10, 2023, the Lynden Christian High School Agricultural Issues Team presented to the Whatcom County Dairy Women which meets at 204 Hawley Street in Lynden WA, at 6:30 p.m. on the Topic of: *Labor: Who is Going to do the Work*". There were 10 people in attendance.

The team did an outstanding job of presenting the issues, of answering questions and demonstrating a wonderful ability to think on their feet. Our group was educated and encouraged by their presentation. We are thankful to have been able to participate with them in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Lallas
President
Whatcom County Dairy Women





4.12.23

Dear Washington FFA Association,

The Lynden Noon Kiwanis club want to thank you for attending our club today. The presentation on "Labor: Who is going to do the work?" was very interesting and provided a lot for us to think on. Clearly a lot of thought from all aspects was put into it.

Our club meets at the Fairway Café meeting room in Lynden, WA and presentation was today April 12, 2023 from 12:30 --- 1:00 with questions. We had 13 members present plus guests.

We enjoyed seeing the presentation of the FFA team and opportunity to ask questions on a topic like this that clearly effects a strong agricultural community like ours.

Best regards,

Israel Jacob
Lynden Noon Kiwanis, Secretary



PO Box 326
Lynden, WA 98264

Dear Lynden Christian High School Agricultural Issues Team,

Whatcom Family Farmers would like to thank you for coming to our recent board meeting on Wednesday, April 12th at the Waples Conference Room in Lynden and giving your presentation "Agriculture and Labor: Who is Going to Do the Work". We appreciated how your group managed to comprehensively address many of the issues that our farmers, along with the rest of the food system, face in accessing labor, especially during harvest.

Full meeting information is as follows:

Wednesday, April 12th at 2:00 PM
Whatcom Family Farmers board meeting
Waples Conference Room at The Inn at Lynden
6 board members, 5 staff members

Sincerely,

Gavin Willis
Business Director, Whatcom Family Farmers
gwillis@whatcomfamilyfarmers.org

