

NC Department of Health and Human Services

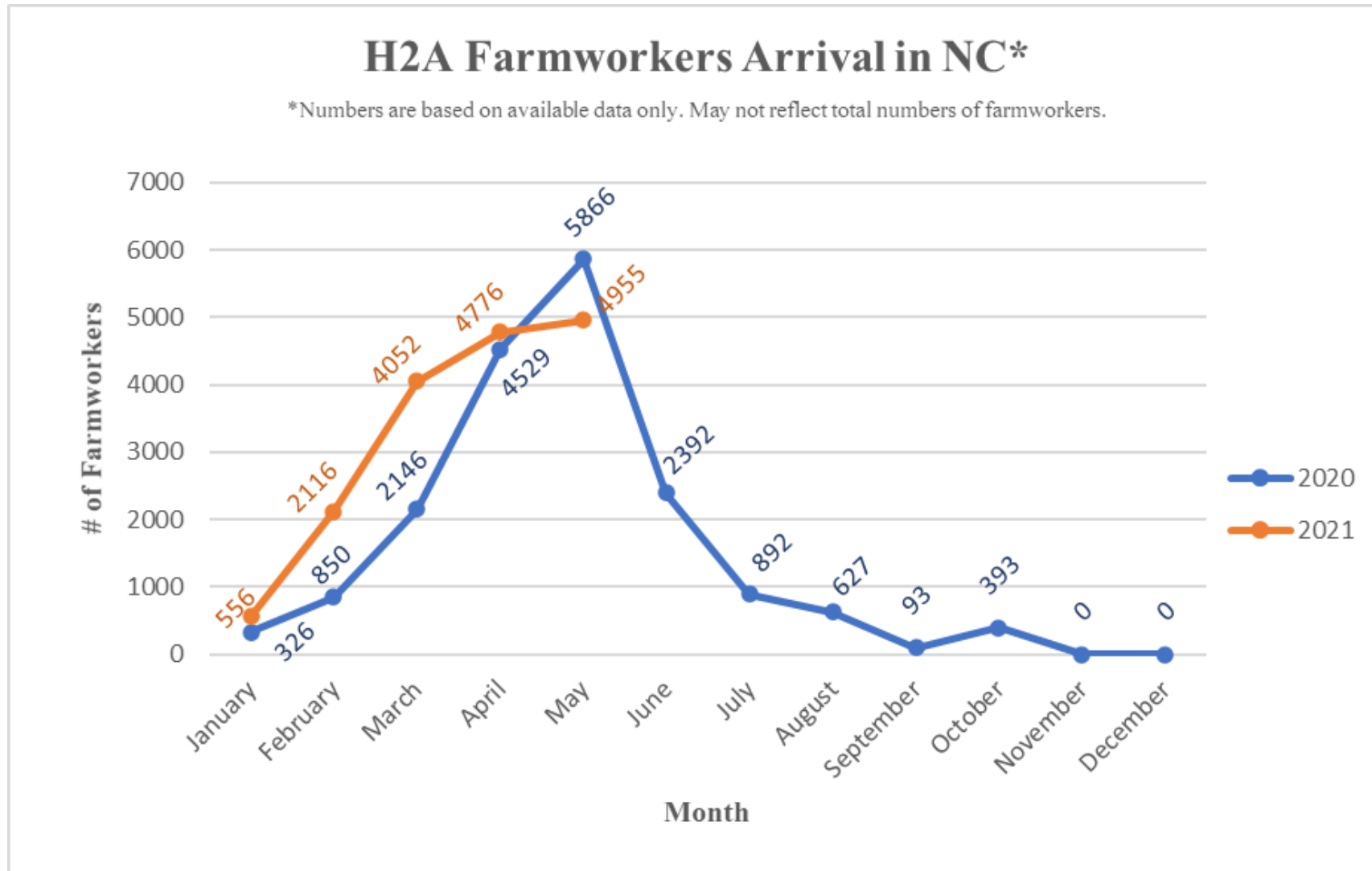
COVID-19 Vaccination Plan for Farmworkers

Khalil Harbi, MSPH
Outbreak Epidemiologist
CDB, Division of Public Health
Khalil.Harbi@dhhs.nc.gov

Elizabeth Freeman Lambar, MPH, MSW
Manager
NC Farmworker Health Program, Office of Rural Health
Elizabeth.freeman@dhhs.nc.gov

Inquiries about the vaccination plan can be directed to:
Vaccine4farmworkers@dhhs.nc.gov

Estimate of 72,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers in NC
(Approximately 23,000 workers with H2A visa, 33,000 migrant and 16,000 seasonal)



Vaccination Approaches

- **Local teams:** conducting outreach to farmworkers, farmers and farm labor contractors; coordinating vaccine arrangements including block appointments, special events, and in some cases, on-farm vaccinations
- **Vendor-supported Reception Hub** to offer the J&J vaccine to a portion of NC' H2A workers upon arrival – initiated April 9th
- **Vendor-supported vaccination sites and mobile units** to provide additional vaccine access in high need areas



NC COVID-19 Farmworker Vaccination Monthly Newsletter- April 2021

Created by the Office of Rural Health, NC Farmworker Health Program; and the Division of Public Health, Communicable Disease Branch.

The NC Department of Health and Human Services has implemented the COVID-19 Farmworker Vaccination Plan to get as many farmworkers vaccinated as quickly as possible. Local teams made up of staff from farmworker health clinics, local health departments, NC Cooperative Extension and community health workers are reaching out to farmworkers, farm labor contractors and farmers to help them access vaccines and COVID-19 education and support.

About the Vaccination Plan

- The farmworker vaccination plan was initiated statewide on March 3, 2021. We have held initial and recurrent meetings with local teams in 56 counties, including all 28 counties identified as priority counties based on timing of crops and farmworker density. We plan to finish holding initial meetings with the remaining counties by the end of April.
- All 100 local teams have received their county profiles, which list available local resources including local health departments and Federally Qualified Health Centers' points of contact, enrolled vaccine providers, partner agencies, and community-based organizations active in the county.
- The agricultural community has shared vaccine information widely with growers.
- The Vaccine 4 Farmworkers support email (Vaccine4farmworkers@dhhs.nc.gov) was created to submit questions and request assistance.

Vaccination Plan Approaches

Our plan to vaccinate farmworkers in North Carolina is built upon the following four approaches:

- **Local teams:** We continue to initiate meetings with local teams and offer support where needed.
- **Vendor-supported vaccine sites:** Vaccine sites and events are targeted to high-need counties. A pilot event was held at the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry in Harnett County on April 10, 2021.
- **Vendor-supported mobile services:** Three mobile units for large employers can be deployed if local teams request assistance.
- **Vendor-supported centralized location:** We set up a centralized location to vaccinate H2A workers

upon arrival starting April 9, 2021.

Sharing Our Successes

Every week, local teams respond to a survey sent out by NC DHHS that includes data on the number of farmworkers vaccinated, outreach efforts, and some qualitative data around the successes and challenges of local efforts. Here are a few highlights from recent survey responses.



Vecinos mobile unit in Leicester, NC

Education is Key

The Cooperative Extension agent in Jackson and Swain counties is working closely with Vecinos- a nonprofit health care organization serving and advocating for farmworkers in western North Carolina- to coordinate clinics and mobile vaccination appointments. Vecinos provides vaccines and ample science-based education, and the Cooperative Extension is able to streamline their outreach efforts through this collaboration.

Stronger Together in Hyde County

Hyde County Health Department and the local Cooperative Extension already had a strong partnership before the local team's vaccination efforts began. This made the process even smoother when the Cooperative Extension provided information on farms and workers to the Health Department, and the health director personally contacted each farm. Farmers were sent a Google form to sign up for vaccines for themselves and their staff. H2A workers have not arrived yet, but arrangements have already been made for them to be offered the vaccine when they do.



[Photo by Luke Barber, Avery Journal Times](#)

Fast and Efficient in Avery County

Jerry Moody from the Avery County Cooperative Extension reports an estimated 85 to 90 percent of farmworkers have been reached in Avery county. "So, by percentage," says Mr. Moody, "we have more workers vaccinated than general population."

The Importance of Prevention

Even after you are vaccinated, it is important to continue to practice the 3 Ws. Wear a mask. Wait six feet apart. Wash your hands. That's the best way to protect each other until most people have a chance to get vaccinated.

By the Numbers: A Look at the Data

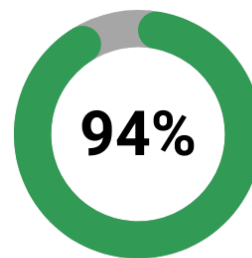
Local teams are tasked to complete an online survey every week to track their progress, including the number of farmworkers vaccinated through their efforts and the number of workers who they are aware declined vaccination. The acceptance rate is based on this reported data.

Survey data* as of **April 23, 2021**, suggest many counties continue to ramp up efforts and vaccine acceptance among farmworkers is high.

9,936 doses have been given to farmworkers**.

4,019 farmworkers are fully vaccinated.

1,419 doses administered on average per week.



of farmworkers accepted
the vaccine

Current data from local teams suggest the agricultural season has not yet started in some counties, but vaccine acceptance among farmworkers is high, and some counties are putting plans in place ahead of workers' arrival.

**Data limitations: Survey data provide a snapshot of local team efforts, not a complete picture of farmworker vaccine access and uptake. These numbers are expected to be undercounts and do not include people vaccinated independently of local teams. Occupation data are not routinely collected during vaccine registration. Additional data are pending from 26 of 100 local teams.*

***Overall number of vaccinations include farmworkers, farmers and farm staff members.*

If you have any questions or concerns, you can email us at
vaccine4farmworkers@dhhs.nc.gov