

Employee Compensation

Compensation includes pay, benefits, and additional rewards with monetary value.

Pay

Dissatisfaction with pay is a primary cause of turnover and lower work input. Employers can use pay to motivate, attract, and retain workers.

Pay that covers living expenses is critical. Farmworkers view pay as a measure of achievement, social status, and their value to an employer.

Strategies for Pay Satisfaction

“40 hours work per week is not enough. We can’t afford the rent anymore”

- **Determine regionally competitive pay rates** by networking or participating in surveys.
- **Offer regionally competitive pay rates** that are responsive to inflation.
- **Offer year-round work** & sufficient hours where possible.
- **Offer profit-sharing or bonuses.**

“Pay should reflect experience. Some people don’t know how to do the work, yet are paid the same”

- **Implement and administer** pay fairly and openly.
- **Implement structured pay scales** to recognize seniority & experience, and to reward returning seasonal workers.
- **Consider participation in labor certification programs**, which include premiums paid by buyers.

Benefits

Non-pay compensation includes health and life insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off.

Offering fringe benefits promotes a more productive, dedicated, healthier, and sustainable labor force.

Strategies for Benefits Satisfaction

“I am grateful to the company for the very good opportunities and benefits”

- **Consider offering benefits to all workers.** Including options for seasonal workers can increase return rates.
- **Prioritize offering health insurance and paid time off.** Farmworkers tend to favor these over other benefits.
- **Ask employees which benefits they want and provide choices,** as individual preferences differ. Some farmworkers place high value on life, vision, dental, and retirement benefits.
- **Offer family coverage** and insurance plans with low deductibles.

“The medical insurance premium is very expensive for us”

- **Pay 100% of premiums** (or as close as possible) to preclude employee resentment over wage deductions.
- **Allow personalization of benefits.** Those who place less value on benefits may opt out or choose plans with smaller wage deductions.
- **Frequently communicate about available benefits,** ideally in employees’ native language(s). Clarify details about coverage and costs to answer common questions and reduce confusion.
- **Consider a medical assistance bonus** that employees can use to offset medical costs if health insurance cannot be offered.

Additional positive labor tools & resources:

<https://ucanr.edu/county/napa-county-ucce/viticulture>

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Rewards

In addition to pay and benefits, offering rewards can have an outsized impact on employee morale.

Rewards can be used to motivate employees by conveying that they are valued team members and to alleviate specific cost of living burdens.

Inspiration for Rewards

- **Employer-supplied food and drink** in the workplace, such as refreshments at meetings and meals during harvest.
- **Periodic celebrations to reward the** completion of goals or mark significant dates.
- **Resource fairs** where community organizations and local businesses share useful information about health, finance, and education with employees.
- **Visits from medical professionals** to provide complementary screenings, interventions, and information.
- **Gifts of branded clothing, accessories, equipment, or agricultural products.**
- **Fuel allowances** to alleviate financial burdens of commuting.
- **Public transport passes** to assist with transportation costs outside of commutes.
- **Scholarships for employees or family** to support professional development and educational advancement.
- **Free ‘food from the farm’** grown on company land.
- **Periodic food packages** to offset food insecurity.
- **Gift cards or prizes to recognize** exceptional performance, leadership, or achievement.

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