



AMERICAN AGRI-WOMEN 2023

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO LABOR IN THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

ISSUE:

The forest products industry, including loggers and haulers, primary and secondary manufacturers, pulp and paper mills, paper packaging plants and paper facilities, is one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the US, sustaining nearly 940,000 families and contributing \$295 billion annually to the US economy. The sustainability and competitive viability of the forest products industry relies on an intact, healthy wood supply chain, including labor. Since 2018, the US logging and hauling sectors which are solely responsible for harvesting and moving logs from the forest to manufacturing facilities have seen a 2% reduction in logging business and an 8% reduction in the workforce. The disparity between reductions in the size of the workforce and business closures suggests remaining logging businesses are operating with fewer employees.

AMERICAN AGRI-WOMEN REQUEST:

AAW supports including language in the Rural Development Title of the 2023 Farm Bill that directs the Secretary of Agriculture to create a grant program to establish immersive pathway training programs focused on the work development needs of the forestry industry.

BACKGROUND:

Rational

Targeted workforce education and training programs have been effective recruitment tools in computer programming, utility vegetation management and automotive industries. Regional forest industry training hubs would allow participants to stay in or near their communities, which reduces the cost to participate and affords program developers increased flexibility in adapting training curricula to meet regional needs through ties to local forest products employers. The forest products industry struggles to find trained and skilled workforce at all levels as an estimated 40-60 percent of young adults are leaving rural forest-based economies for other employment opportunities.



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Conclusion

AAW supports these key components of a workforce pathway program:

- Expand existing high school forestry education curriculum by employing mobile educational units with timber harvesting simulators, sawmills, kilns and commonly used power/hand tools
- Implement 40-hour applied skills camp to complement the applied high school curriculum
- Provide immersive field training for high school teachers to complement the applied high school curriculum
- Diversification of the forestry industry workforce through increased awareness of career paths, the breadth of career and entrepreneurial opportunities in forestry and wood products industries