

**Draft Script**  
**How California Drought is Impacting Undocumented Workers**  
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Dyan Ruiz, Voiceover: Undocumented farm workers are the backbone of America's farm industry. Already living on the margins, the California drought is hitting them the hardest.

People Power Media went to West Fresno to find how the drought is impacting undocumented workers and their families.

We interviewed an undocumented farm worker, her son, a social worker, a City official, and local youth on what they're experiencing and seeing because of the loss in jobs caused by the drought.

Enedina Bibanco is an undocumented farm worker.

**Enedina Bibanco [translated from Spanish]:**

**I'm very worried with this drought, because if I don't have job, I want be able to help my family, if there is no water, there is no job, it is a big issue for me as a mother because you have to work to help your family, and if there is no water, there is no job, the drought is taking everything**

Dyan, VO: Social worker Candie Caro sees the huge difference in job prospects from when she was growing up in the area. A system of reservoirs and canals brought water from the nearby Sierra Nevada mountains to make the Central Valley, America's Breadbasket, providing \_\_\_\_\_ of nation's produce.

Dyan, VO: Social worker Candie Caro sees the huge difference in job prospects from when she was growing up in the area. A system of reservoirs, canals and river deltas bring water from the nearby Sierra Nevada mountains to make the Central Valley, America's Breadbasket, providing half of nation's fruit, vegetables and nuts.

**Caro: Growing up there was always jobs,  
never thought there'd be no water  
River level is really low [points]  
used to be 3-4 months of seasons (ex. Lettuce) are now 5 weeks  
...  
used to be row crops that hire 50 people, now hire 3 people**

Dyan, VO: A 2014 UC Davis report estimated that state-wide, some 17,000 seasonal and part-time jobs, with nearly 90% of those job losses are in the Central Valley. The Central Valley runs 450 miles inland from the Pacific coast from the towns of Redding to Bakersfield. The Central Valley will lose an estimated 409,000 of the 428,000 acres of crops lands that will be lost in California.

**Dyan Standup 1:**

While the official unemployment numbers for places like Mendota already seem bad, anywhere from 30 to 50 percent, the real unemployment rate can be as high as 70 percent when you factor in undocumented workers who can't find jobs.

Bibanco:

I'm from Mexico, came from Tijuana and I came here since I tough there whre more opportunities to help my family,

...

The effects I see now due to the drought is that job is getting lower, there was much more before, but that's due to the drought, a lot of friends are not working anymore.

The effects I've seen is the work is getting scarce, the fruit production also.

Dyan, VO: Bibanco must travel farther and farther to look for work. And when she gets there, sometimes there isn't a job available.

Enedina Bibanco [translated from Spanish]:

Most of the times I go that far because people says there are taking workers. Sometimes when I go they are actually not taking workers.

Dyan, VO: When she does find work, she now works hourly instead of getting paid by filling each box with fruit, which ends up being less money for her.

According to the Executive Director of Dr. Ann López of Center for Farmworker Families, workers can be paid much less if they're paid by the bushel or box during the drought, as the smaller fruits and vegetables require more work to fill the quotas.

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[http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/17060/california\\_drought\\_hangs\\_farmworkers\\_out\\_to\\_dry](http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/17060/california_drought_hangs_farmworkers_out_to_dry)]

The drought is exacerbating already exploitative conditions for undocumented farm workers. Caro says they often entrust labor contractors, who charge a fee, in addition to the ride to the work site.

Caro:

[Undocumented workers] They get paid less than minimum wage, sometimes \$5/hour

...

Undocumented don't want to speak out for fear of deportation, separation from family.

Dyan, VO: Miguel is Bibanco's son. He knows first hand the fears that Caro speaks of.

Miguel Bibanco:

Growing up you're scared about family being separated, mom being deported, I get deported

I didn't know I was undocumented

I used to have this fear of any official documents

Mom is limited in the kind of work she can do, and jobs she can find

I don't where I can find a job that will hire me

Major reason we stay here and live here in Fresno and try to work

We're staying in this area because of the comfort area

Dyan, VO: The Southern Poverty Law Center estimates that at least six out of 10 of all farmworkers in the US are undocumented.

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[http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/Injustice\\_on\\_Our\\_Plates.pdf](http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/Injustice_on_Our_Plates.pdf)]

So while, there may be some comfort level for Bibanco and her family because of the prevalence of undocumented workers in the area, there are no "sanctuary cities" in Fresno County, and the undocumented worker can be deported by ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at any time.

This also means that there's limited resources that undocumented workers can access while trying to make ends meet during the drought.

JWS3357\_Interview\_Candie\_03

[Undocumented workers] They can't receive unemployment, no food assistance from the county, no medical, no housing assistance,  
Very difficult

You can find 3-4 families living in shack in a middle of a field.

Dyan, VO: Some resources are available, but these are very limited.

Dyan Standup 2: [change because of report on unspent drought assistance funds?

<http://www.sfexaminer.com/sanfrancisco/a-year-later-california-drought-relief-money-is-unspent/Content?oid=2932739>]

Going into the fourth year of the severe drought, it's not just wells and jobs opportunities that are drying up, so are the funds to assist farm workers.

Caro:

In my area, west Fresno County... went through \$600,000 in rental assistance in 4 months. [Good but moves, need to confirm this was available for undocumented workers.]

Dyan, VO:

Food prices are going up for everyone because of the California drought. Half of the nation's fruits, veggies, and nuts come from California. Meanwhile, many undocumented workers queue up in lines around the block for food banks to bridge the gap between what they're being paid and their expenses, like rent.

JWS3474\_Interview\_Miguel.MOV Lavender

Ironical that people who pick fruit and vegetables for California and US are the people who have the least access to food.

Dyan, VO:

Access to water for personal use is also an issue for farm workers. Nacho Ledesma is a Mendota Middle School Student who met a café. He had a lot to say about what he's seeing because of the drought.

\_JWS3350\_Interview\_Nacho\_02

There's a couple people that I know that they moved away because it's hard for them, they can't keep up with their bills. They can't keep up anymore.

And it's hard for them because if they don't get no money, then how are they going to pay for their water?

Now they put locks on their meters so they can't turn it on to take a shower or to get a cup of water.

Dyan, VO: Wells in rural areas are drying up and costs for drilling new wells have skyrocketed. In the Central Valley, costs for pumping groundwater total close to \$450 million dollars because of the drought.

Some farms can afford the increased costs and are drilling deeper to find the rapidly depleting groundwater. But this, in turn, affects surrounding wells, like Caro's, which is drying up. Also, the deeper you go, the saltier the groundwater. Estimates by UC Davis say that groundwater is replacing as much as 75% of the agricultural water supply in California because of the loss of available surface water.

Many local residents in Fresno County distrust the water coming from their taps and buy bottled water for drinking.

The social impacts of the drought on farm workers goes deeper than access to jobs, food, water and shelter.

Joseph Amador is the Mayor Pro Temp of Mendota and a former police officer.

Amador:

Working for Fresno County, I would see Mendota has high domestic violence

A lot of drug use

No centers for drug addiction in rural areas

There's domestic violence and rape counseling in Firebaugh

That's 8 miles away, 16 round trip and people can't afford

Dyan, VO: Caro sees the same thing as a social worker.

Caro:

Because of the drought, men feel they can't provide for their families

They become alcoholic

Get promises to pay for liquor

Increased domestic abuse of wives and children

Youth are turning to gangs

Because there's a problem at home

They can feed them

Fill the gap

A lot more theft and violence.

Dyan, VO: Youth with more stable homes do what they can to help their family. Miguel helps take care of his little brother while his mom is out working. Nacho and his friends find ways to make money.

\_JWS3350\_Interview\_Nacho\_04

My friends across the street, on the weekends, sometimes they work sometimes on the fields, getting extra money for their parents.

...

they see that their parents need help doing things. Because they're parents are getting older or retiring. They just can't do it anymore. Some of my family members are still working in the fields and it's hard for them.

Dyan, VO: The average life expectancy for a farm worker in America is only 49 years old.

[Show [http://www.farmworkerfamily.org/ ?](http://www.farmworkerfamily.org/)]

Nacho's mom works at Burger King and his dad can't work because of a stroke.

\_JWS3350\_Interview\_Nacho\_04

I don't like to ask my parents, oh can you buy me this. I'd rather go sell cans. I'm not ashamed of it. or car batteries, easy 6 dollars. I share with my little brothers and sisters.

...

I'd rather work now so I can see, OK, do I want to be doing this my whole life or just summers? I'd rather get an education. Me personally I'd like to be a mechanic because I like to work with cars.

Dyan, VO: Transitioning to other industries is tough because the undocumented workers aren't able to work for those industries. Need for immigration reform. Solar farms and job fairs.

\_JWS3348\_Interview\_JosephAmador\_01

Agriculture has been the heart of our valley. But if we're seeing that we're not going to get the water, let's look at other things to help the economy and help create jobs.

The construction of that state route 180...

There's been these solar plants that have helped us in our community. They've started to help. We've had one built in our community, and in the surrounding areas, which helps.

I went to job fair the other day and that's good. We have to diversify and do other things too. So I'd like to see our infrastructure on transportation worked on. And again, if there's ways to bring that water to us, bring it to us, and help these farmers grow the crops that need to be grown.

\_JWS3349\_Interview\_JosephAmador\_03

If you have nothing bad in your background, you should have a document saying I'm here to work. I'm here to make a better life for my family.

\_JWS3357\_Interview\_Candie\_06

We offer training and employment. And Proteus does have an education school in Fresno, solar training, and also truck driving training. And again, we also assist with truck driver training, finding employers with skills that customers do have and try to see if they get an opportunity for training.

On-the-job training

...

Small mom and pop places that would give that opportunity are closing up. So it's affecting everyone.

Dyan VO: Just like the the politics of immigration reform are complicated, so are the politics of who has access to water. Caro, who is on the local Drought Coalition, and has seen many marches for water allocations, has also seen how challenging it is to find a long term solution to the water needs of the Central Valley.

\_JWS3358\_Interview\_Candie\_02

I was in Sacramento, and I've listened to both sides, as far as the ecologists, and so forth. In regards to the fish and the delta smelt, and the deltas. And allowing more water to come into the valley would allow more salt, and would be harmful, so I see both sides. And it's sad on both sides. I've seen that if we have no more water, the valley will die out. It'll turn into a dustbowl. And yet if they allow more water, the salt will be harmful. And it will eventually, get to the valley here. So it's a domino effect. You don't know which is the worse of the two.

The salt coming eventually into the valley or.

Like I said, I see both sides and I can understand both sides, but right now it seems like to me the valley is where I grew up, it's where I'm from. But I can also see how we can do more harm. We need an immediate fix, and water is an immediate fix, but where's it going to come from?

\_JWS3358\_Interview\_Candie\_09

What I'd like to see happen is more rain. More rain. Without the rain, without water, without a place to store the water, it's just going to get worse. At this point we just need rain.