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ECONOMIC SECURITY and OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

A Growing Problem

How Market Power in Agriculture Fuels Racial & Economic Inequality

AREEBA HAIDER, ADIAM TESFASELASSIE, SIDDHARTHA ANEJA, & SIERRA WILSON

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Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality

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I. Introduction

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers made it nearly impossible for many farmworkers and workers in meat and poultry processing plants to obtain appropriate protective gear, practice social distancing, or isolate when exposed to disease to prevent spread. Farmworkers and meatpacking workers–performing "essential" work side-by side and often returning home to crowded living conditions–were among those facing the highest risk of contracting COVID-19.[1] At least 59,000 workers at Tyson Foods, JBS USA Food Company, Smithfield Foods, Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation, and National Beef Packing Company were infected with COVID-19 as their companies refused to offer workers even minimal protections to prevent the spread of deadly disease.[2] Those five companies combined control over 80 percent of the national beef market and 60 percent of the national pork market–and they used their overwhelming power over workers with few options to prioritize profits over safety, urging federal and local agencies to keep plants open despite the risks.[3,4]

The COVID-19 pandemic has only served to highlight and exacerbate the power employers have in concentrated sectors, and the dangerous conditions to which those workers have always been subject.

Over the last few decades, market power and corporate consolidation have risen,[i] increasingly concentrating economic and political power among fewer corporations across the country. Market power reinforces–and is reinforced by–economic inequality and structural racism.[5,6] Workers, consumers, and communities of color disproportionately shoulder the consequences of poorly regulated market power and consolidation.

i For the purposes of this brief, market power refers to the ability of a single corporation or a small number of corporations to set the terms of interactions with workers, suppliers, consumers, and communities. Market power is present when one or more companies can set prices for goods, services, and labor (i.e. wages); determine product, service, and job quality; and control the availability or accessibility of goods, services, or jobs. When a firm or firms have power as the only sellers in a market, it is known as a monopoly. A monopsony refers to a market characterized by a firm or firms exercising power as the main buyer(s). When competition is minimal, those firms can use their leverage to either pay a lower price for goods and labor or charge higher prices for the goods and services than in a more competitive market.

Corporate concentration and consolidation is pervasive in the agricultural sector. Concentration in crop production affects seed and equipment suppliers, farm owners, farmworkers, traders, processors, transporters, wholesalers, and other consumers. Concentration has also risen among animal producers (e.g. ranchers and farmers who raise livestock), suppliers (e.g. feed and medicine suppliers), and processors (e.g. slaughterhouses and meat processing plants.)

Combined with structural racism, market power in the agricultural sector has created toxic–and sometimes fatal–conditions for workers throughout the supply chain. Small farmers of color–who policymakers have historically excluded from the supports made available to their white counterparts–have struggled to achieve profitability as a few, large corporations amass market power.[7] Dominant companies are able to commit well-documented labor abuses against farm workers in part through structural exploitation of a largely immigrant and undocumented workforce who are low-paid, provided few if any benefits, and fear retaliation in the face of labor standard violations.[8,9,10] That same structural exploitation forces workers in poultry processing and meatpacking plants to do dangerous, demanding work with few protections and little accountability for their employers.

This brief further examines how the harms of market power–particularly in crop production, animal production, farm labor, and animal slaughtering–and structural racism and economic inequality are intertwined.

II. The State of Market Power in the Agricultural Sector

The agricultural sector has accumulated harmful levels of corporate market power, in part due to high corporate concentration, increasing mergers, and mechanisms such as vertical integration and production contracts. The harms of high concentration fall disproportionately on those with the least economic and political power, including people of color, immigrants, and low-income communities.

The meatpacking industry, the animal production industry, and the crop production industry are influenced by market concentration.[ii] One of the most common measures of market concentration is the industry concentration ratio, or the share of revenues from a given industry's largest firms compared to the overall revenues for that entire industry. While in 2017, the average four-firm concentration ratio across all industries was 35.3 percent,[11] the four-firm concentration ratio in the animal slaughtering and processing industry was 42.5 percent.[iii] In other words, the largest four firms in the animal slaughtering and processing industry were responsible for 42.5 percent of the industry's revenues, a share that is about 20 percent greater than that of the largest four firms in the average U.S. industry.[12] Unfortunately, the Census Bureau does not publish concentration data for industries

ii The existence of a concentrated market does not necessarily establish that firms in that industry are able to successfully wield market power, and market pressures (such as the threat of new firm entry) may still exist such that large firms in concentrated industries cannot easily set prices. Nevertheless, several studies have shown that market concentration is related to market power, and many researchers use industry concentration as a proxy for market power. See Sablik, Tim and Nicholas Trachter. "Are Markets Becoming Less Competitive." Federal Research Bank of Richmond, June 2019. Available at https://www.richmondfed.org/publications/research/economic_brief/2019/eb_19-06; see also Cavalleri, Maria, et al. "Concentration, Market Power, and Dynamism in the Euro Area."European Central Bank Working Paper Series, March 2019. Available at https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/scpwps/ecb.wp2253~cf7b9d7539.en.pdf.

iii According to a blog post published by the White House in 2021, the largest four firms in the meatpacking industry now control approximately 55 percent to 85 percent of the market for pork, beef, and poultry processing.

in the agricultural sector (which include animal and crop production), but other research and anecdotal evidence demonstrate the high levels of concentration in agricultural and related industries.[iv] For example, around 5 percent of farms are responsible for three-quarters of all farm sales and four companies supply 75 percent of U.S. nitrogen fertilizers. High concentration in many parts of the agricultural sector, from farming to food manufacturing, have been achieved in part through consolidation and perpetuated by government policies.[13]

Market Power Exists at All Levels of the Agricultural Supply Chain

For small farmers and ranchers in crop and livestock production, market power can harm their financial prospects. Increasing consolidation of seed, agrochemical, animal pharmaceutical, and farm machinery suppliers harms small farmers.[14,15,16,17] For example, large seed companies in the corn and soybean seed markets continue to acquire smaller seed firms, and increase the barriers to entry into the market through expensive licensing agreements and protective patents.[18,19] As a result, the largest four providers of corn seed increased their market share by 41.6 percent between 2000 and 2015, from 60 percent to 85 percent, respectively.[20]

The lack of competition among providers leads to higher prices for farmers.[21] Higher seed prices are one reason for the increase in the total cost of farm input expenditure in the United States over the last decade, particularly in the Midwest and the U.S. plains.[22] The total cost of farm input expenditures increased by $77 billion between 2010 and 2020, despite no similar increase in net farm income.[23,24] Between 62.5 percent and 80.9 percent of small family farms (which account for 90 percent of all farms) have an operating profit margin of less than 10 percent, which the USDA defines as "at high risk financially."[v, 25]

As farmers contend with limited options from suppliers, many have also found the number of possible buyers for their products dwindling. Due to consolidation among agricultural processors, large corporate firms have gained considerable control over farms and their means of production,[26] including through production contracts.[vi] Using these contracts, the larger processing company sets the prices and prescribes how the commodity is to be raised or grown.[27,28] Smaller farmers have little bargaining power to negotiate the terms of these contracts, which often require them to assume a substantial amount of debt in order to meet the growing requirements of the processing companies.[29,30] Farmers are also responsible for meeting the company's requirements[vii], and typically assume all liability for sick animals or low crop yields.[31,32]

Although production contracts can help some farmers navigate risk, the increasing use of contracts allows large firms to wield their market power to coerce small farmers to sign contracts and, at times, drive small farmers out of business. In 2018, a USDA study found that

iv Separate products in the livestock and crop production industry will have varying levels of concentration; it is hard to generalize levels of concentration among producers themselves.

v Many small farms have operators who do not consider farming to be their primary occupation. These small farms instead receive substantial income from off-farm sources. Income from off-farm sources are not reflected in operating profit margin.

vi In a production contract, a processing company typically agrees in advance to buy a certain amount of a commodity from the farmer. See Willingham, Caius Z and Andy Green. 2019. "A Fair Deal for Farmers: Raising Earnings and Rebalancing Power in Rural America." Center for American Progress, 7 May 2019. Available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fair-deal-farmers/

vii Requirements regarding production practices include feeding system and chemical applications.

63 percent of all hog production and 90 percent of poultry is produced under contract.[33,34] Approximately 70 percent of cattle sales go to the four largest firms in meatpacking.[35] Large firms not only use these contracts to keep prices low and require farmers to assume substantial liabilities, but also to drive small farms, particularly Black-owned farms, out of business.[36,37] Between 2010-2015, for example, Koch Foods used discriminatory and unjust contract requirements to harm Black farmers such as costly farm renovations. Even as one of the largest chicken companies in the country, Koch Industries went from having contracts with four Black farmers in 2009 to zero in 2017.[38]

BOX 1.

THE USDA'S INEQUITABLE TREATMENT OF BLACK FARMERS

Since the passage of The New Deal farm bills in 1933, government policies targeting the agricultural sector have often encouraged consolidation and vertical integration to the detriment of Black farmers.[39] For example the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) distributed direct payments that primarily went to large-scale farm operations. Those payments increased by 90 percent from the late 1920s to 1940, from 3 percent to 31 percent of farm income, respectively.[40] As large farms with white owners thrived with the aid of federal agencies, small Black farmers were driven out of business—and in some cases, out of their homes and communities.[41,42] USDA agents also perpetuated discrimination on an individual level by denying Black farmers loans crucial to farm-operations and operating through a series of favors to their white family and friends.[43,44] While the overall number of farmers declined by 14 percent from 1930 to 1950, there was a 37 percent decline for Black farmers.[45] USDA discrimination against Black farmers has continued well beyond the Civil Rights Movement. Illegal actions–such as racially discriminatory denials of private loans, intimidation of Black farmers by white supremacists with connections to the USDA, unfair property assessments by speculators, and acts of racial violence–led Black farmers to higher rates of foreclosure.[46] As Black farmers lost their land, their wealth shifted to the white owners of larger farms instead. From 1959 to 1969, the number of Black farmers decreased by over 75 percent–a rate almost triple that of white farmers.[47] In 2012, just 1.58 percent of farmers were Black or African American.[48]

Discriminatory actions taken by the USDA paved the way for heightened consolidation in the agricultural industry that continues to disparately impact Black farmers today. Agricultural policies supporting vertical integration and the growth of agribusiness continued throughout the 1970s, encouraging agricultural corporations to acquire more land, newer and better equipment, and engage in contract farming.[49,50] Black farmers, already excluded from the government financing that made large scale operations feasible, were once again disadvantaged by federal policy that incentivized larger yields.[51]

In 1999, Black farmers filed a class-action discrimination suit (Pigford v. Glickman) against the USDA for discrimination on the basis of race and USDA's failure to "investigate or properly respond to complaints from 1983 to 1997."[52] The USDA initially provided one billion dollars to settle the claims of 16,000 farmers (with a later consent decree allowing for thousands of new claims).[53,54,55] Despite this, many Black farmers were not made aware of the proposed settlement (as is required by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure) or had legal representation that did not help them secure the money to which they were entitled. The issues led to a subsequent filing (referred to as Pigford II) and included those who "had not previously obtained a determination on the merits of [their] claim."[56] However, several of the problems associated with the initial settlements still remained, leaving many Black farmers who had suffered discrimination at the hands of the USDA without settlement money or additional recourse.[57]

Another way market power presents itself in the agricultural sector is through mechanisms such as vertical integration, where firms expand to control multiple parts of the supply chain. Vertical integration is particularly prevalent in the pork and poultry industries, and one company in these industries can be responsible for the entire life cycle of an animal as well as its processing, packing, and marketing.[58]

Growing concentration is not simply an outcome of creating ever more efficient food production and processing systems.[59] Rather, those concentrated systems have been built through decisions that exploit and endanger workers while maximizing profit for a select few. As smaller farms and processors are unfairly undermined in favor of large farms and corporations, those same large entities are then better positioned to exploit hired farm laborers and workers in processing plants. For example, in 2018, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged Koch Foods with sexual harassment, national origin and race discrimination, and retaliation against a class of Hispanic workers at Koch's Morton, Miss., chicken processing plant.[60]

Lack of Federal Enforcement Promotes Agricultural Market Power

The federal government, particularly through the USDA, played an important role in facilitating concentration and creating the conditions for harmful market power to thrive. However, federal agencies such as the USDA, The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) also have policy tools to reverse consolidation in the sector. For example, the DOJ has the legal authority to enforce the Sherman Act of 1890 and the FTC has the legal authority to enforce Clayton Act of 1914.[61,62] These laws were intended to preserve and promote market competition by preventing price-fixing and other anti-competitive behaviors.[63,64]

Between federal courts and enforcement agencies, modern day antitrust law enforcement in agriculture has been a patchwork at best. Under a class action lawsuit brought against Tyson Foods, the plaintiffs alleged that Tyson Foods kept the price of cattle low through "marketing agreements," where sellers and buyers agree on a price ahead of a sale.[65] Paired with Tyson Foods' large market share, these agreements reduced demand at the open cash markets, where prices are sensitive to supply and demand and determined through public bidding. However, the 11th Circuit Court argued that the behavior was not anti-competitive because, according to the court, the producers freely chose to enter into a contract with the buyer (Tyson Foods). Recently, the DOJ accused Tyson—along with 18 other poultry processors—of conspiring to manipulate poultry prices through purposeful flock destruction and distributing detailed data on production rates among "competitors" in order to coordinate prices.[66,67] The case was declared a mistrial after jurors failed to reach a verdict, with other litigation still pending[68,69]

Though the federal government has, on occasion, taken action against monopolies in the agricultural industry, it has repeatedly failed to do so where monopsony is involved. DOJ power is largely geared towards the prevention of mergers as opposed to price-raising or lowering.[70] Notably, instances of coercion directed towards producers have historically been categorized as "the freedom to contract." For example, in Pickett v. Tyson (2005), a Federal Appeals Court held that Tyson's allegedly purposeful deflation of fed cattle prices was not unlawful under the Packers and Stockyards Act since the producers had willingly entered into an agreement with Tyson.[71] Thus, they were liable to reap not only the benefits of the agreement, but the consequences as well.

III. Market Power Harms Agricultural Industry Workers

Employment in the agricultural sector, including crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering, is dominated by a few corporations wielding their market power. Facing less competition and little accountability, those corporations can suppress wages, and expose workers to unsafe and deadly working conditions. Market power helps create conditions for companies to better exploit racist power dynamics, with people of color, immigrants, and low-income individuals experiencing the brunt of the harm.

Market Power in Food Production & Food Processing Disproportionately Affects Working People of Color & Immigrant Workers

The harms associated with high levels of market power in the crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering industries disproportionately fall on workers of color and immigrant workers[viii] in the United States.[ix] As seen in Figure 1 below, while Latinx workers compose 18.5 percent of the overall non-managerial workforce, a majority of crop production non-managerial

viii Immigrant workers refers to those who were born outside of the United States.

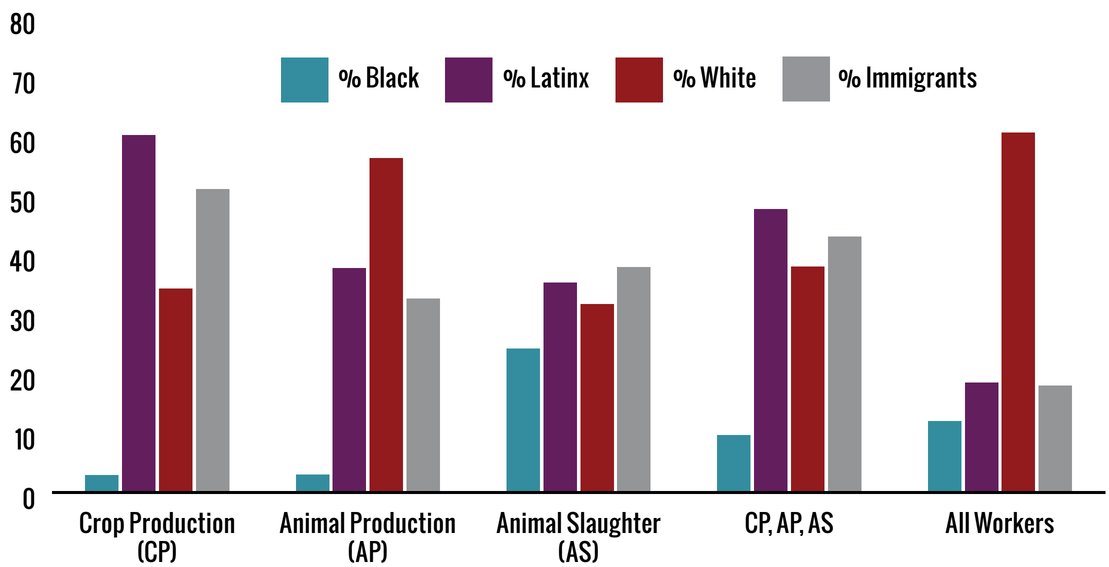
ix Crop Production includes oilseed and grain farming, vegetable and melon farming, fruit and tree nut farming, greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production, and other crop farming. Animal production includes cattle ranching and farming, hog and pig farming, poultry and egg production, sheep and goat farming, animal aquaculture, and other animal production. It does not include fishing, hunting, and trapping. Animal slaughtering and processing includes animal slaughtering, meat processing from carcasses, rending and meat byproduct processing, and poultry processing but does not include seafood product preparation and packaging.

workers—60.2 percent—are Latinx. Similarly, people born outside the United States account for 18 percent of the non-managerial workforce, but they account for over 50 percent of crop production workers[x]. Non-managerial workers in the animal production industry are also disproportionately Latinx and born outside the U.S. Specifically, 37.8 percent of the animal production workforce are Latinx and 32.6 percent were born outside of the United States. Animal slaughtering similarly has a high share of Latinx and foreign-born non-managerial workers, but unlike the food production industries, it also has a sizable share—24.2 percent—of Black workers. Taken together, workers across these industries are majority non-white, disproportionately Latinx, and born outside the United States.

Many companies choose to locate where they can more easily exploit people for their labor, such as areas with low prevailing wages and high shares of already marginalized workers.[72] Even after locating in those regions, food processing companies employ a disproportionate number of workers of color compared to local demographics. In Mississippi, while Black workers compose a large share—34.6 percent—of the overall workforce, they make up 67.6 percent of animal slaughtering workers.[73] Similarly, Latinx workers in Mississippi make up 9.5 percent of animal slaughter workers, but only 2.8 percent of the worker population. In many communities, the disproportionate share of workers of color in animal processing is a direct result of immigrant and refugee workers who companies go to great lengths to recruit. For example, Tyson recruits Burmese refugees to its plant in Garden City, Kansas, and a turkey plant in Colorado recruits and busses workers from Durango, Mexico.[74, 75] Temporary immigrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by employers because their ability to remain in the U.S. is tied to their employer.[76]

FIGURE 1. Workers in food production & processing are largely Black or Latinx & disproportionately immigrant workers

Share of Black, Latinx, White, & immigrant workers by industry



Note: Based on analysis of 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. Workers in managerial occupations are excluded.

Source: Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2022.

x Migrant workers are typically hired as contractors and often paid far less than direct hires. For example, in California, the median income of a crop worker hired full-time by a farm was $32,500. A contracted "crop support worker" made an average of $27,500. See Martin, Philip. "Employment and Earnings of California Farmworkers in 2015." California Agriculture, 01 November 2017. Available at https://calag.ucanr.edu/archive/?article=ca.2017a0043

BOX 2.

MEAT PROCESSING CORPORATIONS HAVE WORKED TO UNDERMINE WORKER PROTECTIONS & UNIONS

Over the course of the last few decades, meatpacking and poultry corporations have steadily pushed back against worker protections won through union organizing. After World War II, two unions in the meatpacking industry dominated: the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters (the Amalgamated).[77] Where the Amalgamated often capitalized on racially discriminatory tactics in order to attract white membership, UPWA actively worked to combat worker divisions along racial lines.[78,79] The UPWA merged with the Amalgamated in 1968, eventually forming the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW).[80,81] This merger ultimately resulted in greater concessions made to employers as the union moved away from the UPWA's more worker-oriented approach, allowing meatpacking companies to disregard worker demands with little consequence.[82]

Though meatpacking industry workers have much higher rates of unionization than the broader private sector workforce,[83] protections for these workers are being undermined by corporations with significant market power.[84] Employers in both the poultry and meatpacking sectors have begun actively recruiting undocumented workers as a way to further thwart unionizing efforts.[85] Undocumented workers are often viewed as more exploitable since they are less likely to be familiar with U.S. labor laws and even less likely to complain due to the looming threat of deportation.[86,87] Though Mississippi has traditionally been home to a higher percentage of African American workers than other states with meat and poultry processing plants, the number of workers hailing from Latin America has risen dramatically over the course of the last few decades.[88,89] This is due to a calculated move on the part of poultry processors in Mississippi, done largely in response to the growing threat of unionization among their Black workers.[90] Tactics such as these contribute to the meatpacking and poultry sectors' continued success in undermining union protections for their workers.

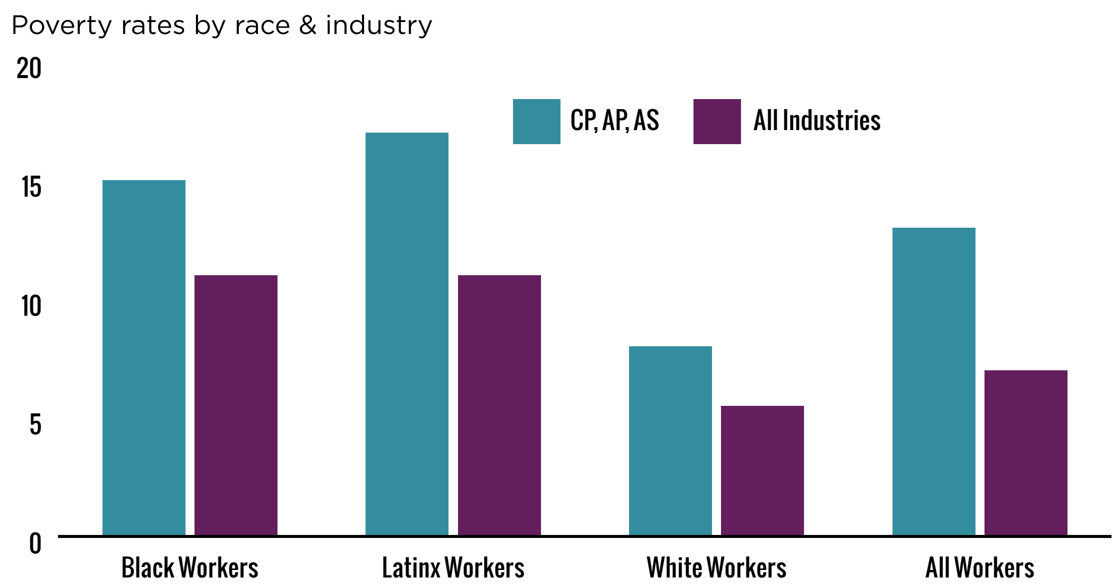
The U.S. legal system has also contributed to the weakening of worker protections. Under the National Labor Relations Act, agricultural worker unions may exist but are not entitled to legal protections.[91] Though the statute "covers a large number of workers based on the broad definition of employee," it fails to explicitly include "agricultural laborers" under the definition of "employee."[92] Since meatpacking and poultry workers are likely to live and work in more rural areas with less access to legal services or alternative employers—and are often undocumented—this omission leaves such workers intensely vulnerable to exploitation.[93,94]Moreover, companies may also rely on workers in the H-2A Visa for Temporary Workers program.[95] These workers are often made to pay recruitment fees in addition to travel costs in order to obtain an H-2A visa.[96] Many workers also report receiving less wages than were advertised by recruiters.[97]

Market Power Facilitates Poor Treatment of Food Production & Processing Workers

Market power in the food production and processing industries suppresses wages and leads to high shares of workers living in poverty.[xi] While the median income for U.S. non-managerial workers across all industries[xii] is $36,029, the median income in the crop production industry is $23,723, the median wage in the animal production industry is $27,012, and the median wage in the animal slaughtering industry is $30,304. However, earnings for workers in these industries have not always been so low. In 1970, the inflation adjusted wages for meatpacking workers' were 28 dollars an hour, corresponding to an estimated salary of $58,240 a year.[xiii,98] Employer consolidation, related de-unionization, and the increasing exploitation of immigrant workers in the meatpacking industry have contributed to the drastic decrease in wages for meatpacking workers.[99]

Non-managerial workers in food production and processing are more likely than the average worker to experience poverty, including when accounting for race. Black workers in crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering industries are nearly one and half times more likely to live in poverty than Black workers across all industries. More than 17 percent of Latinx workers in the crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering industries live in poverty, compared to 10.5 percent of Latinx workers across all industries. White workers in food production and processing are similarly more likely to be in poverty than all white workers.

FIGURE 2. **Many workers in food production & food processing are paid poverty wages**



Note: Based on analysis of 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. Workers in managerial occupations are excluded.

Source: Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2022

xi Working people with low levels of educational attainment are especially subject to local employer market power because they are significantly less likely to find employment in different counties, cities, and states than people with higher levels of educational attainment. Non-managerial workers in animal and food production are much more likely to have lower levels of degree attainment than the average non-managerial worker. Only 8.2 percent of non-managerial workers in the crop production industry, animal production, and animal slaughtering industries have a bachelor's degree. See Borsch-Supan, Axel. "The Role of Education: Mobility Increasing or Mobility Impeding." National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w2329/w2329.pdf.

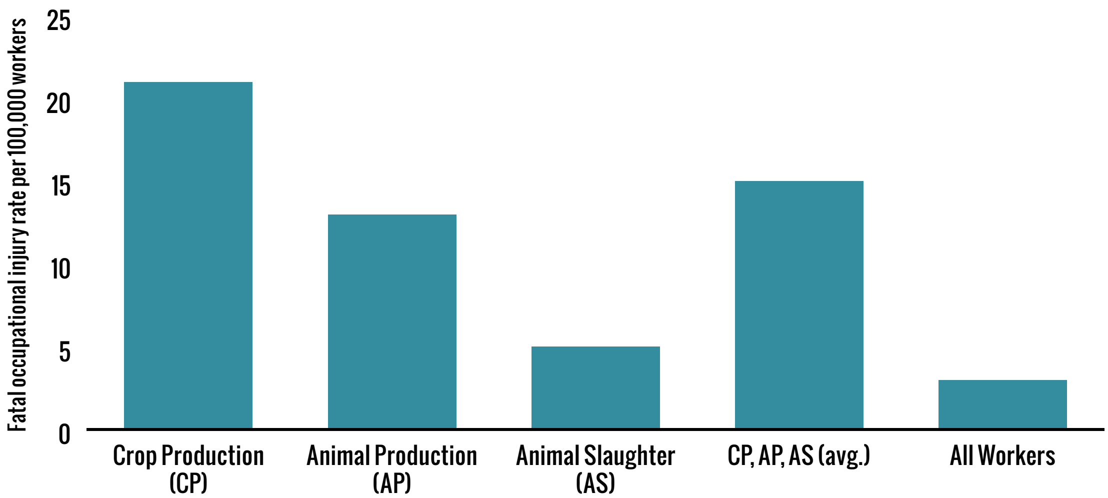
xii All industries include all industries with 4 digit NAICS industry code, and median income excludes non-managerial workers.

xiii Assuming people worked 40 hour a week and 52 weeks a year.

Industry concentration also leads to risky or treacherous working conditions.[100] In the food and agricultural industries, market power enables powerful corporations to impose dangerous, unhealthy working conditions that result in high rates of fatal and nonfatal occupational injuries to workers. Factory farms take advantage of workers from low-income and immigrant families who may have limited job prospects due to language barriers.[101] Workers are placed in dangerous and demanding working conditions and are exposed to substantial "environmental hazards that are harmful to their health and well-being."[102,103] Because of those working conditions, farm workers suffer from "increased rates of respiratory diseases, noise-induced hearing loss, skin disorders, certain cancers, chemical toxicity, and heat-related illnesses."[104]

FIGURE 3. Workers in food production and processing experience higher rates of fatal occupational injuries

Fatal occupational injury incident rates by industry



Note: CFOI fatality counts exclude illness-related deaths unless precipitated by an injury event. The avg for CP, AP, AS is a weighted average calculated by authors.

Source: Georgetown Center on Poverty, 2022. Data adapted from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, December 2021.

As seen in Figure 3, the inability of workers in the crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering industries to demand better conditions can lead to significant workplace trauma.[xiv] Crop production workers, in particular, have an extremely high death rate. In 2020, nearly 21 out of every 100,000 full-time crop production workers died from workplace injuries, a rate that is almost ten times the national average across all industries. Workers in animal production and animal processing are also significantly more likely to die from workplace injuries than the national average across all industries. Workers also suffer from other serious injuries,[xv] and poor working conditions in crop production, animal production, and animal processing has led to high rates of nonfatal injuries. For every 100 full-time workers, there are 5.2 nonfatal injuries–90 percent greater than the national average rate of 2.9 nonfatal injuries per 100 full-time workers.

xiv Other industry trends may also partially explain the high levels of workplace injury in these sectors. The assembly lines in poultry processing have sped up by over 50 percent over the last three decades (in the 1990's, the maximum allowable poultry line speed limit was 91 chickens per minute, but in 2021 that speed has increased to 140 chickens per minute). As a result, injuries in the animal slaughtering industry are caused by the rapid, repetitive motions in cold, very loud conditions, working environments workers do not have control over. See Sun, Lena and Gabriel Escobar. "On Chicken's Front Line." *Washington Post*, 28 November 1999. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/11/28/on-chickens-front-line/55e5bd7b-d67a-4090-803e-acb10b45b4a3/; see also ; Gershon, Livia. "Why Does Meatpacking Have Such Bad Working Conditions?" New Labor Forum, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), pp. 66-77. Available at https://daily.jstor.org/why-does-meatpacking-have-such-bad-working-conditions/.

xv Nonfatal occupational injuries can be very serious and injuries include burns, fractures, electric shocks, cuts, amputations and more.

IV. Conclusion

Consolidation and concentration across industries in the agricultural sector reinforces structural racism, disadvantaging small farmers of color and subjecting workers to dangerous conditions for little pay.

The federal government has been instrumental in creating the conditions that allow structural racism and market power to intertwine and thrive—but the government also has the tools to change that reality. Promising action is being taken, including large investments from the USDA to support competition from small and medium sized meat and poultry processors and to support the development of safer workplaces in meatpacking plants.[105] The federal government has also committed to a renewed focus on fighting entrenched market power in the United States economy, both in and beyond the crop production, animal production, and animal slaughtering. As long overdue changes are made to reverse the harms of market power in the agricultural sector, policymakers must center solutions that advance racial and economic justice.

Endnotes

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