

In the early part of the 20th Century, during the industrial boom and a period characterized by huge growth in the number of immigrants entering the United States, foreign-born workers came to play significant roles in the U.S. meat industry. At that time, the largest number of immigrants came from Europe. Today, the largest number come to the U.S. from Mexico, followed by East Asia.

The meat industry has long been a starting point for new immigrants because jobs in the industry require little formal education and no prior experience. The jobs also pay well offering, on average, a \$25,000 a year salary plus benefits.

According to a 2006 survey of AMI members, the percent of employees that are non-citizens varies substantially:

- 62 percent of responding plants said between one and 25 percent of their employees indicated that they were non-citizens and presented documents showing they were eligible to work in the U.S.
- 29.3 percent of responding plants said that 26 to 50 percent of their employees indicated they were non-citizens and presented documents showing they were eligible to work in the U.S.
- 5.2 percent of responding plants said that 51 to 75 percent of their employees were non-citizens and presented documents showing they were eligible to work in the U.S.
- 2.6 percent said that between 76 and 100 percent of their employees were non-citizens and presented documents showing they were eligible to work in the U.S.

Plant respondents indicated that the most common race of foreign-born workers in the meat industry is Hispanic, followed by Asian, African and Caucasian

Immigrants as a Percentage of the U.S. Population	
1900	13.6
1910	14.7
1920	13.2
1930	11.6
1940	8.8
1950	6.9
1960	5.4
1970	4.7
1980	6.2
1990	7.9
2000	11.1
2007	12.6
<i>Source: Center for Immigration Studies</i>	

(Non-Hispanic, European or Eastern European).

## Ensuring a Legal Workforce

Concerns about national security have triggered a very public controversy about the need to ensure that foreign-born workers are eligible to work in the United States. The meat industry shares this concern, recognizing the importance of maintaining a stable pool of employees and minimizing turnover.

When screening applicants, employees must provide documentation showing that they are either citizens or possess one of the following documents from the government's "List A:"

1. U.S. passport (unexpired or expired)
2. Unexpired foreign passports, with I-551 stamp or attached INS Form I-94 indicating unexpired employment authorization
3. Alien Registration Receipt Card with photograph (INS Form I-551)
4. Unexpired Temporary Resident Card (INS Form I-688)
5. Unexpired Employment Authorization Document issued by the INS which contains a photograph (INS Form I-688A, I-688B, I-7662)
6. Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (INS Form N-560 or N-561)
7. Certificate of Naturalization (INS Form N-550 or N-570)
8. Unexpired Reentry Permit (INS Form I-327)
9. Unexpired Refugee Travel Document (INS Form I-571)

Once hired, a new employee is asked to fill out a government I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form and is required to present documents that prove identity and eligibility. The I-9 form includes a list of acceptable documents. According to the U.S. government, the employer "must examine the document(s) and, if they reasonably appear on their face to be genuine and related to the person presenting them, you must accept them. To do otherwise would be an unfair immigration-related employment practice."

Because document fraud has become highly sophisticated, the meat industry became an early and outspoken advocate of an online verification system administered by the Department of Homeland Security called "The Basic Pilot."

Origins of Foreign-Born Workers (in thousands)							
	Total Number	Percent of Immigrant Population	Cohorts				Share of Post 2000 Arrivals
			Pre-1980	1980-89	1990-99	2000-2007	
All Latin America	20372	54.6	3443	4442	6467	6015	58.7%
Mexico	11671	31.3	1788	2408	3890	3583	34.9%
Caribbean	3379	9.1	886	752	960	781	7.6%
South America	2725	7.3	492	585	852	796	7.8%
Central America	2597	7.0	277	697	765	855	8.3%
East/Southeast Asia	6558	17.6	1233	1720	1922	1682	16.4%
Europe	4646	12.5	2007	538	1187	914	8.9%
South Asia	2044	5.5	249	388	680	727	7.1%
Middle East	1310	3.5	344	398	324	244	2.4%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1030	2.8	130	155	349	396	3.9%
Not Given/Oceania	621	1.7	158	122	180	161	1.6%
Total	37280	100	7873	7853	11293	10258	100%

*Source: Center for Immigration Studies*

This program originally became available in a handful of states in 1997, but was expanded nationwide through a 2003 legislative mandate that required that the program be available nationally by December 1, 2004.

Implementation of the Basic Pilot requires the employees and employers complete I-9 forms and that employers review documents to ensure the identity and work authorization status of the new employee. Employers then enter the I-9 information into a computer and electronically transmit the information to the federal government.

Information submitted is compared with information in the Social Security Administration's database. This database contains information on name,

date of birth and citizenship status of persons issued Social Security cards, which enables SSA to confirm work authorization for U.S. citizens and some non-citizens who are permanently work authorized.

If the information submitted matches SSA data, the employer is immediately notified that the employee is verified. If the employer-submitted information is inconsistent with SSA information, the employer is notified that the employee has received a tentative non-confirmation finding. Employees have ten days to respond and resolve the matter. Employers may take no action against the employee during these ten days.

The Basic Pilot ensures that the name and Social Security number presented match. The Basic Pilot cannot determine if a Social Security number is in use in multiple locations or verify employment history

against the history being claimed by the applicant.

The meat industry was one of the first industries to embrace Basic Pilot. According to an AMI survey of its members, 62 percent of responding plants said that they voluntarily use the Basic Pilot. Eighteen percent said they use a private verification process. Eighteen percent said they work directly with the Social Security Administration. Many use multiple verification steps.

### Ensuring a Stable Community

Meat companies benefit when they ensure that their workforce is stable. For these reasons, many plants work hard to ensure that their employees – and particularly foreign-born employees – integrate well into communities, obtain the services they need and become productive members of the community.

Plants offer a wide array of programs designed to assist employees.

- Tyson Foods, Hatfield Quality Meats and many other companies offer chaplaincy programs in which confidential pastoral care is provided to team members and their families. Tyson employs two full-time and 124 part-time chaplains in 78 plants and 159 other locations throughout the U.S., Mexico and Canada. The chaplains represent 34 different faiths and group affiliations.
- Tyson was named Corporation of the Year by the Arkansas Regional Minority Supplier Development Council for exceeding standards for corporate diversity.
- Greater Omaha Packing offers assistance with citizenship process and celebrates and recognizes

employees who have recently become U.S. Citizens. In 2005, Greater Omaha was recognized by the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce as one of the top five companies (with 250 employees or more) to work in Nebraska.

- Greater Omaha also has received numerous awards from the Wellness Council of America for their proactive efforts to ensure employee health.
- Kenosha Beef runs monthly raffles for savings bonds for babies born to employees and celebrates each new birth in their bilingual newsletter.
- Omaha Steaks and many other companies provide cultural sensitivity training to those in leadership positions. This helps break down any communication, language and literacy barriers.
- Meat companies routinely publish corporate newsletters in both English, Spanish and often other languages to ensure that all employees feel included.

### Summary

Plants report that when they do a particularly good job in working with an ethnic group, word spreads among that group and often more people of the same background apply for jobs. Good practices and sincere efforts to meet the needs of employees reap rewards in the form of more applicants, lower turnover and more stability. And conscientious efforts by employers to ensure applicants' work status further stabilize the work force and benefit the industry.

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### Helpful Links

**American Meat Institute**  
<http://www.meatami.com>

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**  
<http://www.uscis.gov>

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement**  
<http://www.ice.gov>