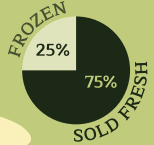


# Strawberries AND labor

## Growing Conditions in California

California produces **90%** of the strawberries grown in the United States, with total production valued at **\$2.34b**



### Strawberry Harvest: A Fragile and Labor Intensive Crop

The **care** with which workers select, handle, and pack the fragile fruit is the **greatest single determinant of market price**. Pickers have to bend down while harvesting, straining the body, and making strawberries **one of the most labor-intensive crops**.

The **timing of harvest is critical**, as strawberries can rot very quickly and easily. The fruit ripens sequentially over the seven-to-nine months' harvest period, and it **must be picked in a few days**. Fruit left on the vine is unpickable. Plants that are picked too infrequently will stop blooming and producing fruit.

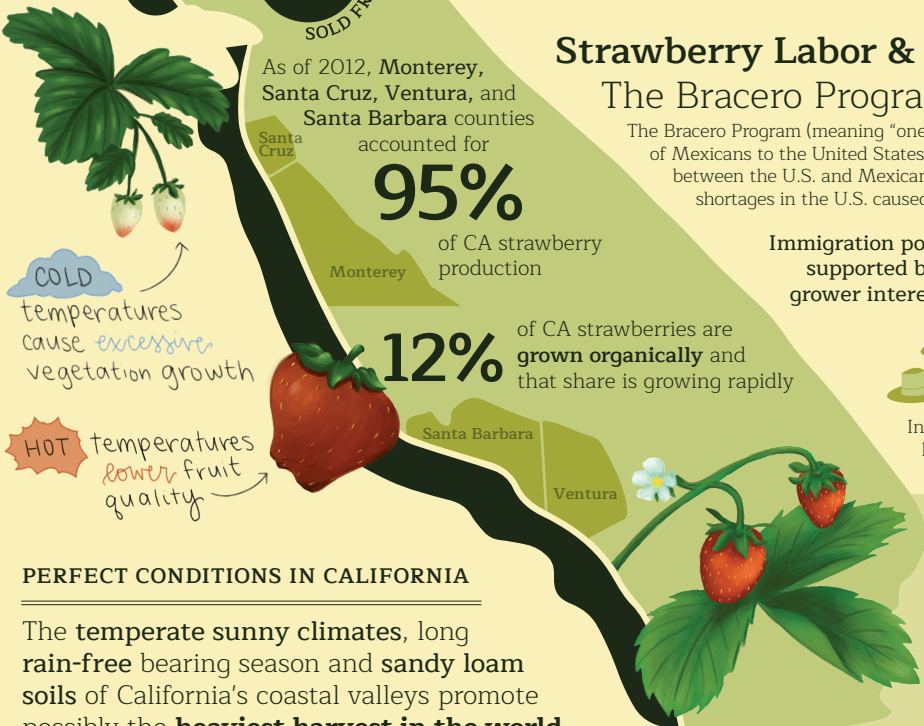


**100%** picked by hand, no machine harvesting

**200 pickers** are needed for a **100 acre farm**

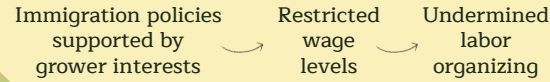
**64 for 32 acres**

**28 for 14 acres**



### Strawberry Labor & Immigration: The Bracero Program, 1942-1965

The Bracero Program (meaning "one who works using his arms") brought millions of Mexicans to the United States as guest agricultural workers. The agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments started in 1942 to meet labor shortages in the U.S. caused by WWII.



In 1962, state records listed **70%** of peak harvest strawberry workers as braceros.



**Farm Profile:**  
Swanton Berry Farm,  
Davenport, CA

**1<sup>st</sup> organic** strawberry farm in California

**1<sup>st</sup> organic farm** to sign a contract with United Farm Workers in 1998



In 2014, Swanton Berry Farm became one of four farms in the United States to receive the **Agricultural Justice Project's (AJP) Food Justice Certification** label, which sets rigorous standards for respectful treatment of farmworkers, living wages, safe working conditions, and collective bargaining rights.

#### PERFECT CONDITIONS IN CALIFORNIA

The **temperate sunny** climates, long **rain-free** bearing season and **sandy loam soils** of California's coastal valleys promote possibly the **heaviest harvest in the world**.

#### Learn More

For lessons that explore the topics covered in this infographic go to: <https://edibleschoolyard.org/resource/strawberries-and-labor>

**References:** Miriam J. W (1996). *Strawberry Fields*. New York: Cornell University Press

Infographic compiled by Raquel Vigil and designed by Grace Stees.  
Illustrations by Courtney Shojinaga.

