



PRESS RELEASE!

For Immediate Release – November 30, 2021

Press Contact

Gabrielle Vignone, Executive
Director, *House Farm Workers!*
Info@HouseFarmWorkers.org
805.921.0430

House Farm Workers! announces \$50,000 grant to fund Countywide Farmworker Housing Study, giving a voice to Ventura County farmworkers

Ventura County – *House Farm Workers!* has received a \$50,000 grant awarded by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to support a comprehensive Countywide Farmworker Housing Study that proactively and comprehensively addresses farmworker housing in Ventura County. The study seeks to give a voice to the County's estimated 36,000 farmworkers, shining a light specifically on local housing needs for this vulnerable yet essential population. The last time a farmworker study was completed was nearly 20 years ago in 2002.

The Countywide Farmworker Housing Study will seek to better understand where our farmworker community lives, what percentage are permanent full-time workers, how many are here alone or with their families, and other critical questions to help inform future advocacy efforts, policies, and targeted programs that address critical farmworker housing needs, while also supporting agricultural businesses with a stable and healthy workforce.

“Being one of only two organizations within Ventura County to be awarded a SCAG grant that is directly related to housing policy and land use is very exciting,” said *House Farm Workers!* Board Chair Leslie Leavens, retired VP of Finance and Operations for Leavens Ranches. “We’re also encouraged by the support we’ve received from the County of Ventura along with the cities of Camarillo, Oxnard, Santa Paula and Ventura, all of whom have included support of the study in their 2021 Housing Elements.”

The Countywide Farmworker Housing Study, funding for the Housing Trust Fund Ventura County, and a permanent source of dedicated funding for affordable housing, were all included in the recently adopted 2021-2029 Housing Element, a component of the County's General Plan. The County's support of this study demonstrates its commitment to understanding more about this essential population living and working within our communities. The County of Ventura has also made a \$100,000 grant commitment for the initial study and is working side by side with *House Farm Workers!* and consultants to develop it.

Helping *House Farm Workers!* navigate through the County and City Housing Element Updates is consultant Jennifer Coile, a Harvard University graduate with a Master of City and Regional Planning degree. Coile has more than 30 years' experience in planning, affordable housing, management, and public engagement for more than 15 California cities, most recently managing the Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan for Salinas and Pajaro Valleys.

“Through Jennifer's leadership we are now moving into the next phase of deepening community engagement within the County's farmworker community — including those who employ farmworkers, affordable housing providers, farmworker advocates, and other supporters — through the formation of an Advisory Council, which will help develop consensus on what should be included in the survey,” said Gabrielle Vignone, Executive Director for *House Farm Workers!*

About the Organization – Since 2004, *House Farm Workers!* has been promoting safe, decent, secure and affordable housing for farm workers and their families in Ventura County through education and advocacy. The nonprofit 501c3 actively and continually advocates for the agricultural community to elected representatives and community leaders about the need for safe, decent and affordable housing for Ventura County farm workers and their families. There are approximately 36,000 employed farmerworkers in the county, all of which hold key roles in Ventura County's \$2 billion-a-year agricultural industry. The average farm worker's annual income is \$22,000, which is less than the average annual cost to rent an apartment in Ventura County. – www.HouseFarmWorkers.org, (805) 921-0430, info@HouseFarmWorkers.org.

###