Research exercise: Human Trafficking: Forced Agricultural Labor in the US

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Get the facts
• 14,500 to 17,500 people are trafficked in the United States each year.
• For every 1 person forced into prostitution 9 are forced into labor.
• 10% of enslaved persons in the US are forced into agricultural labor.
• Forced labor is most commonly found in seasonal fruit and vegetable harvesting. Tomatoes being one of the most common vegetables associated with forced labor.
• According to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers 5% of agricultural workers in America are enslaved.
• Over the last 10 years there have been 6 federally prosecuted cases against Florida farm owners affecting more than 1,000 workers.
• The majority of victims are migrant workers from Mexico, Guatemala, and Haiti. Their vulnerability and desperation for work make them easy targets.
• Most cases involve debt bondage. The trafficker will take the worker to America on credit which they are to work off once they arrive. However, they are forced to work for minimal wages and charges for expenses, which results in the impossibility of repayment.
• Farm workers are some of the poorest paid and most exploited workers. They earn on average $10,000 a year.
• California, Florida, and Hawaii are the three states with the highest numbers for forced agricultural labor.

What can you do?
• Do your research before buying your fruits and vegetables.
• Try to buy from places like local farmers markets instead of large chain grocery stores.