Recidivism and Employment of Agribusiness Workers: FY2020 Releases

Introduction

VADOC's Agribusiness program provides inmates with various training opportunities, while also providing food to the inmate population to help reduce the Department's food costs. Inmates participating in the program can work in food production, saw mill operations, row crop operations, swine operations, or on the beef and dairy cattle farm. This report assesses the impact of Agribusiness employment on job attainment and recidivism after release from SR incarceration as well as recidivism and employment trends of Agribusiness releases between FY2018 and FY2020. In FY2020, 208 state responsible (SR) inmates were released who held Agribusiness jobs during their release term of incarceration.[1] FY2020 was chosen as the year to analyze because it is the most recent year for which a three-year follow-up is available with mature data.
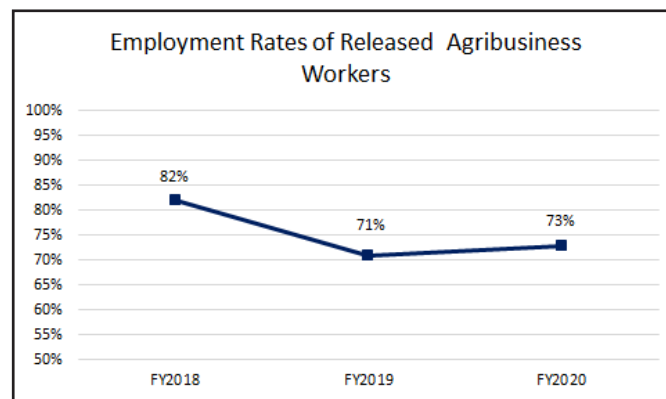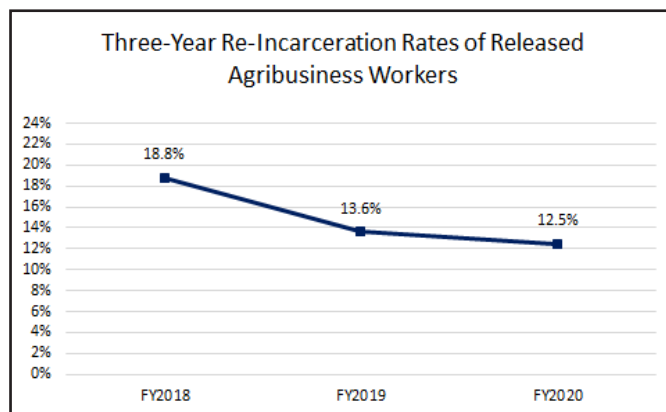
Agribusiness Trends

The recidivism rate of released Agribusiness workers has steadily decreased from 18.8% in FY2018 to 12.5% in FY2020. Agribusiness workers have consistently had lower recidivism rates than the overall SR release cohort for their respective years. The employment rate of released Agribusiness workers has shown a slight decrease across the three years. In FY2018, 82% of Agribusiness workers found employment post-release while only 73% of FY2020 Agribusiness workers found post-release employment. FY2019 had the lowest rate of post-release employment at 71%. The lower rates of employment among the FY2019 and FY2020 Agribusiness releases may be partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent hiring freezes across multiple industries during that time.

Three-Year Re-Incarceration Rates of Released Agribusiness Workers

Employment Rates of Released Agribusiness Workers

Agribusiness Worker Characteristics

Of the 208 Agribusiness workers released in FY2020, the vast majority were male (83%). The racial composition of the workers was 73% White and 26% Black. The average age at release was 41.0 years old and the largest percentage of releases were between the ages of 30 and 39 years old at release (37%).

Demographic factors such as gender and age are known predictors of recidivism.[2] Females had a slightly higher recidivism rate than males (13.9% and 12.2%, respectively), which deviates from the usual trend of males having higher recidivism rates than females. Inmates who were White had a higher recidivism rate (13.2%) than inmates who were Black (9.1%). Inmates who were under the age of 30 at release had the highest recidivism rate of any age group at 25.0%. Inmates who were 40 to 49 years old when released had the lowest recidivism rates of any age group (6.9%).

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1 Due to the small population size, results should be interpreted with caution.
2 VADOC Research-Evaluation Unit (2024): FY2019 State Responsible Releases.

At 12.5%, Agribusiness workers had a lower recidivism rate compared to all FY2020 SR releases (17.6%). When compared to the recidivism rates for all inmates released from SR incarceration in FY2020, the Agribusiness participant recidivism rate was lower than those who did not participate (12.5% and 17.7%, respectively); however, this difference was not significant.

Employment After Release

For this study, participants were counted as employed only if their wages were reportable to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC).

FY2020 Agribusiness Releases: Demographic Characteristics, Recidivism Rates, and Employment						
	Agribusiness*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	208	100%	26	12.5%	151	73%
Gender						
Male	172	83%	21	12.2%	123	72%
Female	36	17%	5	13.9%	28	78%
Race						
White	151	73%	20	13.2%	105	70%
Black	55	26%	5	9.1%	45	82%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	<1%	1	100%	1	100%
Unknown	1	<1%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Age at Release						
Under 30	20	10%	5	25.0%	16	80%
30-39	77	37%	13	16.9%	61	79%
40-49	72	35%	5	6.9%	50	69%
50+	39	19%	3	7.7%	24	62%
Age at Release (Mean)	41.0					
Age at Release (Median)	40.0					

*Percentages in the Agribusiness column may total 99% to 101% due to rounding, as they are calculated out of the total number of Agribusiness workers.

**Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

Unreported wages could have been employed in another state or with an employer not subject to the unemployment compensation laws.[3] According to VEC data, 73% of Agribusiness workers released in FY2020 were employed during the three-year follow-up period.[4] Agribusiness workers had a higher employment rate than the overall FY2020 SR release cohort (61%). The recidivism rate of those who were employed after release was lower than those who did not find employment after release (8.6% and 22.8%, respectively); this difference was statistically significant.[5] Of the 151 Agribusiness workers who were employed following release, the average wages earned per quarter was $6,762.23 (median of $6,025.25).

Employment Statistics: FY2020 Agribusiness Releases		
	Mean	**Median**
Quarterly Wages	$6,762.23	$6,025.25
Time to Employment*	1.5 Quarters	0.0 Quarters
Percent Employed**	53%	46%
Number of Employers	3	3

*Time to employment was calculated as the difference between employment quarter/year and release quarter/year.

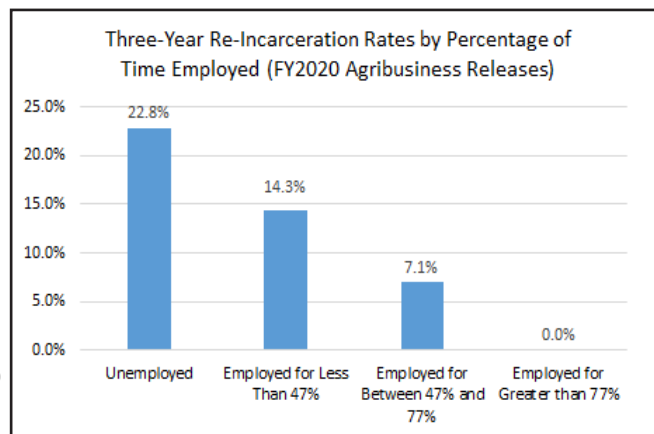**Percent of eligible quarters an individual was employed while at liberty.

On average, it took these inmates over one quarter (1.5) to find employment. Those who were employed sustained employment for approximately 53% of the time they were at liberty (median of 46%) and averaged three different employers during the follow-up period (median of 3).

Inmates who found employment and were employed less than 47% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the highest recidivism rate of 14.3%, which is lower than the re-incarceration rate of the same population in the overall FY2020 cohort (18.4%). For those who found employment, recidivism rates decreased as the percentage of time employed increased.

Three-Year Re-Incarceration Rates by Percentage of Time Employed (FY2020 Agribusiness Releases)

- Unemployed: 22.8%
- Employed for Less Than 47%: 14.3%
- Employed for Between 47% and 77%: 7.1%
- Employed for Greater than 77%: 0.0%

Those who were employed for greater than 77% of the time they were at liberty during the follow-up period had the lowest recidivism rate (0.0%), which is over four percentage points lower than the same population in the FY2020 cohort (4.1%). Overall, Agribusiness participants had lower recidivism rates than the overall FY2020 cohort.

3 Only Virginia employers who are subject to tax provisions of the unemployment compensation laws are included in the data; freelance/under the table employment and employment records from outside of Virginia are not included; https://www.vec.virginia.gov/employers/.

4 The follow-up period was from the quarter/year the inmate was released through 12 additional quarters or through the quarter/year the inmate recidivated. The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted employment during the FY2020 follow-up periods due to shut-downs and restrictions.

5 Chi-square test of significance (p<.01)

Both male inmates and female inmates obtained employment after release at almost equal rates (72% and 78%, respectively). A larger percentage of Black inmates were able to find employment after release than White inmates (82% and 70%, respectively). The majority of inmates under the age of 30 years old at release found employment (80%). As the age at release increased, the percentage of inmates who found employment post release decreased.

Of those who found employment after release, the largest percentage of Agribusiness workers first employment after release was in Manufacturing (21%), followed by the Accomodation and Food Services, and Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industries (19%).

FY2020 Agribusiness Releases Employed After Release: Industry Type		
	Employed After Release	
	Total	Percent
Employment Rate	151	73%
Industry Type*		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2	1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	1%
Construction	17	11%
Manufacturing	32	21%
Wholesale Trade	8	5%
Retail Trade	13	9%
Transportation and Warehousing	8	5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Service	28	19%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1	1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	1%
Accommodation and Food Services	28	19%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	7	5%
Public Administration	1	1%
No Industry Code	2	1%

*VEC records of the first job the Agribusiness worker earned wages from upon release from SR incarceration were used to classify industry type. Industry type categories were created based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Crime Type

Crime type represents the most serious offense from the FY2020 release term of incarceration. Inmates whose crime type was violent had a higher recidivism rate (19.4%) than inmates with property/public order (14.9%) or drug-related (6.6%) crime types. Inmates whose most serious offense was violent had the highest rates of employment (84%) followed by those whose most serious offense was drug-related (76%) or property/public order (66%).

FY2020 Agribusiness Releases: Recidivism Rates and Employment by Crime Type and Previous SR Incarcerations						
	Agribusiness*		Recidivists**		Employed After Release**	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	208	100%	26	13.6%	151	73%
Crime Type						
Violent	31	15%	6	19.4%	26	84%
Property/Public Order	101	49%	15	14.9%	67	66%
Drug	76	37%	5	6.6%	58	76%
Previous SR Incarcerations						
No previous SR terms	86	41%	11	12.8%	63	73%
1 previous SR term	64	31%	6	9.4%	48	75%
2 previous SR terms	31	15%	7	22.6%	22	71%
3 or more previous SR terms	27	13%	2	7.4%	18	67%

*Percentages in the Agribusiness column may total 99% to 101% due to rounding, as they are calculated out of the total number of Agribusiness workers.
**Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

SR Incarceration History

Inmates who had two prior SR incarcerations had the highest recidivism rate (22.6%), while those with three or more previous SR incarcerations had the lowest recidivism rate (7.4%). Except for those with no prior SR incarceration, as the number of previous SR incarcerations increased, the percentage of Agribusiness workers that were able to find employment after release decreased. However, the rates should be interpreted with caution due to the small population size.

COMPAS[6] Risk and Needs Assessment

The COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment tool is used by the VADOC to determine the risks of general and violent recidivism as well

FY2020 Agribusiness Releases: Recidivism Rates and Employment by COMPAS Scores*						
	Agribusiness**		Recidivists***		Employed After Release***	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Overall	208	100%	26	13.6%	151	73%
COMPAS Risk of General Recidivism						
Low	63	30%	4	6.3%	45	71%
Medium	93	45%	16	17.2%	67	72%
High	52	25%	6	11.5%	39	75%
COMPAS Risk of Violent Recidivism						
Low	112	54%	11	9.8%	77	69%
Medium	67	32%	9	13.4%	52	78%
High	29	14%	6	20.7%	22	76%
COMPAS Substance Abuse Needs Score						
Unlikely	32	15%	3	9.4%	22	69%
Probable	52	25%	6	11.5%	37	71%
Highly Probable	124	60%	17	13.7%	92	74%

*The last COMPAS assessment during the release term of incarceration was used.
**Percentages in the Agribusiness column will total 100% as they are calculated out of the total number of Agribusiness workers.
***Percentages in the Recidivists and Employed After Release columns were calculated out of the total number within each specific category.

6 Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions.

as criminogenic needs. In terms of risk of general recidivism, those who scored 'Medium' had the highest recidivism rates (17.2%). Those who scored 'High' had the highest percentage employed post-release (75%). Comparatively, those who scored 'High' on the risk of violent recidivism scale had the highest recidivism rates (20.7%) among the three categories. The highest percentage of employment among the risk of violent recidivism categories was among those who scored 'Medium' (78%). Inmates who scored 'Highly Probable' on the COMPAS substance abuse needs scale had the highest recidivism rate at 13.7% compared to those who scored 'Unlikely' (9.4%) or 'Probable' (11.5%).

Conclusions

This report examined the recidivism and job attainment rates of Agribusiness workers who were released from SR incarceration in FY2020. Agribusiness workers achieved a lower recidivism rate and a higher post-release employment rate than Virginia's overall release cohort, though the difference in recidivism was not significant due to the small number of Agribusiness workers. These preliminary findings suggest Agribusiness participation may support successful re-entry by promoting both job attainment and employment stability.