vinetur

Trump signals possible shift on undocumented farmworkers as administration considers temporary legal status plan

Farmers could gain more control over long-term workers while details of proposed immigration changes remain unclear and unconfirmed

Thursday, July 3, 2025



President Donald Trump said in a televised interview that his administration is developing a plan to allow farmers to keep long-time undocumented workers on their payrolls without fear of deportation. The comments came during an appearance on Fox News' Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo, recorded last week at the White House Diplomatic Office and broadcast on Sunday.

Trump explained that the proposed measure would give farmers more control over the status of their employees, many of whom have worked in agriculture for years but entered the country illegally. “When we go into a farm and we take away people that have been working there 15 or 20 years, who are good, who possibly came in incorrectly ... What we're going to do is, we're going to do something for farmers where we can let the farmer sort of be in charge,” Trump said. He added that the plan would involve “some kind of a temporary pass where people pay taxes where the farmer can have a little control, as opposed to you walk in and take everybody away.”

The president’s remarks suggest a shift from his administration’s previous hardline stance on immigration enforcement, at least as it applies to agricultural labor. Trump acknowledged the difficulty many farmers face in finding workers willing to do physically demanding jobs and said removing experienced employees could “end up destroying a farmer.” He also referenced similar challenges faced by hotels and other industries that rely on immigrant labor.

Currently, U.S. farmworker visa programs do not offer legal status to undocumented immigrants already living and working in the country. Trump did not provide details about how the new “pass” would work or when it might be implemented. There has been no official statement from the White House clarifying the proposal since the interview aired.

In the same interview, Trump addressed trade policy, saying he plans to reimpose tariffs on imports from more than 200 countries after a current pause ends on July 9. He stated that he would notify each country by letter about their new tariff rates, which could range from 20 percent to 50 percent depending on the product and country. “I’d rather send them a letter, a very fair letter,” Trump said. “Congratulations, you’re allowed to trade within the United States of America. You’re going to pay a 25 percent tariff, or a 20 percent, or a 40 or 50 percent.”

Trump indicated he could extend the negotiation pause if needed but emphasized his preference for direct action over further talks. He cited Japan as an example, criticizing what he described as an imbalance in auto trade between the two countries.

The president also commented on Canada’s digital services tax proposal, which was dropped between the time of his interview and its broadcast. He reiterated his view that Canada relies heavily on U.S. trade and suggested close economic ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, data from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shows that since Trump took office, more than 95,000 people have been arrested by ICE agents, including 38,000 immigrants with criminal convictions. However, recent figures indicate that nearly half of those arrested since late May had no criminal record. In cities like Los Angeles and New York, almost 60 percent of those detained during early June had neither criminal convictions nor pending charges.

The issue of undocumented farmworkers remains contentious in U.S. agriculture and immigration policy debates. Many farmers argue that strict enforcement threatens their ability to harvest crops and maintain operations due to chronic labor shortages. Advocacy groups for immigrants have called for comprehensive reform that would provide legal pathways for long-term workers.

As of now, there has been no follow-up from federal officials regarding Trump’s proposed farmworker “pass.” The agricultural sector continues to watch closely for any policy changes that could affect its workforce ahead of the July 9 tariff deadline and ongoing immigration enforcement actions.