

# MEININGER'S

WINE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

## A US labour shortage looms

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Larry Walker

In California and the Pacific Northwest, the grape vines began waking up in April. Buds burst open and the yearly cycle of vineyard work shifted into high gear, with skilled workers tying the young buds for support, positioning shoots for optimal growth, and other tasks. For several years now, those skilled workers have been hard to find, but this year it seemed especially hard to get hands on the vines, according to many reports.



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**Crocker & Starr**

**Pam Starr is the co-owner and winemaker at Crocker & Starr Vineyards in Napa.** She has a reputation as a terroir-driven winemaker.

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Wines LLC

On the question of mechanisation and wine quality, her approach appeared to be pragmatic. "I am not sure how you separate wine quality and viticulture with regard to mechanical harvesting and ultra-premium wines. However, as an example, I can say that wine quality is affected if a winemaker who has 100 acres of Chardonnay decides that those 100 acres are ready to harvest in a short window of time and very few bodies to accomplish the task. What is more important – missing the optimal ripeness window versus changing how the wine is produced with mechanically harvested fruit?"

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According to research from the Pew institute, there was a peak of 6.9m unauthorized immigrants from Mexico in 2007, a decade ago. That number fell to 5.8m by 2015 and is still declining.

There are several reasons for the decline, with the threat of deportation one. Perhaps the most important, however, is the booming economy in Mexico. When there are jobs at home, why risk the dangerous journey north to find work? Also, the crackdown on undocumented immigrants has been going on since 2008. According to some sources, one being Global Nation, produced by Public Radio International, there are now more undocumented Mexicans leaving the US than entering. Turns out the border is a two-way street.

