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## Undocumented workers in Sabah plantation sector : by force or by choice

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## **Abstrak**

The plantation sector the oil palm is a growing industry in Sabah contributing a big chunk to the state's economy. However, the sector is also for hiring the biggest number of illegal foreign workers, with approximately more than 2 million. its heavy reliance on foreign and illegal workers, it is highly vulnerable to any government's action that seeks to repatriate illegal worker This paper intends examine two pertinent questions namely why plantations hire illegal workers, and why do foreign workers choose to work as illegal instead of being employed legally This paper is based on several in various plantations throughout Sabah, namely Sandakan, Kinabatangan Lahad Datu and Tawau. This study employed the qualitative method involving observations. The data are also gathered through the interviews with thirty respondents including the government officials, estate managers, and foreign as well as local workers. This study concludes that immigrants frequently decide to work as undocumented workers out of their own will. They also claimed that they conveniently fill in the need for human resources as the locals are not keen to work in estates. Unperturbed by their illegal status, the foreign workers are generally content with their relatively lucrative income.