

# CSCRL SPRING SYMPOSIUM

DOING MORE WITH LESS

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ABSTRACT

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## DOES TASK COGNITION AFFECT EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY?

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Temporary shocks in local employment areas tend to create operational challenges for firms. We investigate two dimensions of these challenges faced by firms that engage workers performing low-skilled tasks in the agricultural industry. We seek to understand (i) which workers leave during these shocks, and (ii) do workers who choose to stay exhibit any change in their productivity? We present data from a natural experiment in an agriculture company. The data is for two farms, where workers performed the same task but used two different protocols that differ in cognitive load (High versus Low). Our findings indicate that shocks in the labor ecosystem increase the strain on farming companies by increasing worker turnover rates. Interestingly, during the shock period, the workers who remained with the firm demonstrated increased productivity.

