



“Reducing Risk Exposure and Increasing Health and Safety Through Farmworker-Farmer Partnerships and Training”

Small Farmer – Farmworker Risk Reduction Partnership Tool

(Produced in Cooperation with the Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.)

Partnership Goals: Our goal is to assist agricultural enterprises to create a culture of safety in the workplace with proactive involvement of management and workers and to ensure adequate workers and employment for small farmers and farmworkers.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

There are four (4) major components to the **Small Farmer – Farmworker Risk Reduction Partnership Tool** produced in cooperation with the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF), is designed to help decrease injuries on the job and to assure a steady supply of workers and employment to meet labor needs.

These aspects are:

1. An agreement between the farmers and farmworkers;
2. Pesticide Training and Certification,
3. On-site mapping to identify potential sources of injuries; and
4. A meeting with the farmers to correct any identified areas for potential injuries.
5. An Evaluation

1. PRODUCER-FARMWORKER DIRECT AGREEMENT

The first aspect of the Risk Management Reduction Partnership Tool is the development of a direct agreement between a producer and the workers. The following is a broad outline of the contents of the agreement—the legal requirements for such agreements are governed by federal, state and local laws, and in certain cases, labor contracting law may also apply.

The direct agreement is intended to establish an employer-employee agreement without the involvement of a labor contractor. As such, the employer is required to report wages to the IRS and observe other tax laws.

The Farmworker Association of Florida or other similar organizations can act as a mediator for such an agreement. The general idea of the agreement relates to the mutual benefits that can be achieved by each party.

The following aspects related to the workers should be addressed in the agreement:

- guaranteed wages, and other compensation

- clear outline of the number of working days provided or the length of the working season indicating hours to be worked per week
- housing provisions and conditions
- provision of tools and protective equipment
- general liability, workers compensation and other required protection
- responsibility of the producer for maintenance of the equipment
- responsibility of the producer for maintaining a safe workplace and assuring required training.

The agreement should also the following protections for the producer, under which workers agree:

- to stay working for the entire time agreed to in the contract
- to maintain the housing and equipment in good condition
- to engage in quality production
- to participate in trainings on health and safety and use of equipment.

The agreement should also address the mechanism for the resolution of disputes. For example, in the event of a labor dispute, both sides could agree to select a mutually agreed upon mediator to work with them in resolving the dispute.

II. PESTICIDE HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

The second aspect of the Risk Management Reduction Partnership Program includes providing pesticide trainings to all of the workers under contract. These trainings must be provided by certified instructors, such as the Farmworker Association of Florida.

The Pesticide Training Module used is the one created by the Farmworker Health and Safety Institute, and subsequently approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This EPA approval allows the workers to receive a Worker Verification Card from EPA certifying the date of training and indicating that those workers do not need to be re-trained for another 5 years depending on current Federal and State law.

Training Protocol: Because this Pesticide Training Module must be conducted as approved, anyone providing this training must have previously been trained by the Farmworker Health and Safety Institute through two of its master trainers. FWAF has 2 master trainers and all other organizing staff and some of the other staff have received the training and are certified to conduct the Pesticide Trainings and to distribute EPA cards.

The trainings are meant to be interactive. Therefore, there should be no more than 18 participants at any given session so as to allow for full participation. The trainings are based on the belief that farmworkers already have some knowledge about pesticides; the trainings are conducted in such a way as to tap into that knowledge and expand on it.

The trainings must be conducted in the language of the participants in order to allow for this participation by a trainer fluent in that language. The room should be set up in such a way as to encourage conversation and participation.

The trainings use a great deal of role-playing, conversations among the workers and trainers, and visual materials in order to maintain interest and involve the participants. Because of the high level of involvement and the respectful way in which the workers are treated, they have their knowledge supported and learn from each other and the trainers at a much higher level than with many other pesticide training programs.

It is also recommended that the producers and other workers or family members on the farm receive the pesticide training in order to protect their health and educate them about their responsibilities. This practice is recommended, since it enables the producers to better understand what they need to do, why they need to do it, and it then becomes part of the discussion regarding the agreement that is signed.

Training Content: Initially the workers are asked to complete an oral pre-test in order to identify the knowledge which they have regarding pesticides prior to the training. One of the trainers maintains a record of the responses.

Once this pre-test is completed, the trainers begin the actual training, which generally lasts between 1 ½ hours.

The following is a brief summary of the various aspects of the issues covered in the training:

- what are pesticides and why are they used
- symptoms and types of pesticide poisonings
- how pesticides enter the body and how they can affect workers
- field sanitation required
- work clothing
- protections in the home
- laws regarding the type of agricultural situation, restrictions on entry after using pesticides and the type of pesticides used in that industry or situation
- knowing your rights and how to work together to secure them

The areas listed above are covered in many conventional types of trainings. However, the type of interactive training used by FHSI is based on popular education methods that are found to be highly effective in educating adults, especially those of limited formal education. Since this type of educational method is often not used in most training programs, trainers must be certified by FHSI in order to insure the correct use of this methodology. Please contact the Farmworker Association of Florida for further information or to schedule trainings with a certified instructor.

III. ON-SITE MAPPING FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INJURY AT THE WORK SITE

The third aspect of the Risk Management Reduction Partnership Program involves conducting an exercise at the work site with the workers and farmers involved. The purpose of this session is to identify physical and chemical dangers at the workplace.

FHSI has developed this interactive exercise and those who receive the pesticide training receive training on this aspect as well. Again, this exercise is interactive and relies heavily on the participation of the workers.

In general, a detailed diagram of the work and housing areas are done on large paper, identifying on-site housing, fields, and harvesting operations. Physical and chemical dangers are identified by the workers and the producer.

IV. MEETING WITH THE FARMERS TO CORRECT POTENTIAL HAZARDOUS SITES

Once dangers are identified on the mapping chart, the farmworkers and producers confer with one another to make the necessary changes, based on current laws and the provisions of the contract.

V. EVALUATION, OUTREACH AND FOLLOW-UP

The final phase of the program includes evaluation of the experience of all participants, and outreach and follow-up to other farmers to share the experience. All aspects of the training program and the agreement are included in this review.

Further Information: Contact Lorette Picciano, Rural Coalition, 1012 14th Street NW Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005, lpicciano@ruralco.org, or visit www.ruralco.org.

For information on the FHSI training tools and to schedule certified trainers, contact the Farmworker Association of Florida 815 South Park Avenue Apopka, FL 32703. Phone: (407) 886-5151; email: Tirso Moreno at tirsomoreno@hotmail.com.



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