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For Immediate Release

Proposed Changes to the Workforce Protection Standards
Regulations Surrounding Farmworker Protections Updated

February 20, 2014 Washington, D.C.—The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced proposed changes to the agricultural Worker Protection Standards. This is the first time in 21 years that the rules and regulations concerning American farmworkers and pesticide safety will be updated.

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) commends EPA for striving to increase protections from pesticide exposure for the nation's 2 million agricultural workers and their families. This is an important milestone for farmworkers who plant, tend, and harvest the food that Americans put on our tables and feed our families.

Proposed changes include:

- Increased frequency of mandatory trainings (from once every five years to annually) to inform farmworkers about the protections they are afforded under the rule, including restrictions on entering pesticide-treated fields and surrounding areas, decontamination supplies, access to information and use of personal protective equipment.
- Expanded mandatory posting of no-entry signs for the most hazardous pesticides. No-entry buffer areas surrounding pesticide-treated fields will protect workers and others from exposure from pesticide overspray and fumes.
- Measures to improve the states' ability to enforce compliance including requiring employers to keep records of application-specific pesticide information.
- Personal Protection Equipment (respirator use) must be consistent with the Occupational Safety & Health Administration standards for ensuring respirators are providing protection, including fit test, medical evaluation, and training.

“The goal is to protect and improve the health and wellness of the farmworker community who are daily exposed to pesticides while bringing food to our tables.” says Melanie Forti, Director of Health & Safety Programs for AFOP. “These are common sense changes that need to be implemented without delay,” Forti continues.

The EPA is seeking public input for the next 90 days, by the date specified in the Federal Register notice, which will publish within 10 days at <http://www.regulations.gov> identified by docket number [EPA-HQ-OPP-2011-0184-0002](http://www.regulations.gov).

At the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), a national federation of non-profit and public agencies that provide job training and services for America's farmworkers, the Health & Safety Programs division develops trainings and coordinates health promotion activities to protect farmworkers from pesticide poisoning, heat-related illness, and other life-threatening occupational hazards. Our national network of trainers reach thousands of farmworkers each year across the United States. For additional comment or an interview with an AFOP expert, please contact Robert Crumley at (202) 828-6006 x140 or crumley@AFOP.org.

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