



## **PESTICIDE POISONING PREVENTION**

By Vashti Kelly

Over 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S. navigate dangerous exposure to pesticides throughout their working lives when harvesting the foods we eat. This is an occupational hazard the average American worker never has to consider as they benefit from comprehensive workplace protections, farmworkers are not protected by the same health and safety standards. And, since many farm workers live in the same communities in which they work there is no escaping the peril.

When used properly pesticides offer a variety of benefits from increased crop production to combating insect infestations. However, pesticides also have the potential for causing serious harm. In the U.S. alone there are over 1 billion pounds of pesticides used annually, three-quarters of which are used in agriculture.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency estimates 10,000-20,000 farm workers are diagnosed with pesticide poisoning each year. Many occurrences go unreported due to a number of factors such as failure to seek medical attention and misdiagnosis of symptoms.

AFOP's [Health & Safety Programs](#) provides pesticide safety education and heat stress prevention trainings to the farm worker communities nationwide. We strive to empower farm workers to protect themselves against falling victim to the acute and chronic diseases linked to long-term exposure. Education and prevention are key factors to staying safe.

Next week is National Farmworker Awareness Week and to commemorate farm workers and raise awareness AFOP's Health & Safety Programs is sponsoring a national long sleeve shirt drive. Wearing long sleeve shirts helps protect farm workers from pesticide exposure and heat related illnesses while working in the fields. Shirts will be distributed free of charge to farm workers in the participating communities.

For more information on AFOP's Health & Safety Programs annual [National Long Sleeve Shirt Drive](#) and the [drop-off locations](#), please check out our website at: <http://afop.org/health-safety/nfaw/>.

The [Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs](#) is a non-profit, national federation of 52 non-profit and public agencies that provide training and employment services to migrant and seasonal farm workers. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all farmworkers and their families through advocacy, education, and training.

For additional comment or an interview, please contact Melanie Forti, Director of Health & Safety Programs at 202.828-6006 ext. 107 or [forti@afop.org](mailto:forti@afop.org).