



Florida Farm Bureau Federation Issue Briefs

Agricultural Policy Division
PO Box 147030
Gainesville, Florida 32614-7030
Phone: 352/374-1544

WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD

Background:

What is the Worker Protection Standard?

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is a rule within the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). WPS has been in place since 1972. The goal of WPS is to 1) eliminate or reduce exposure to pesticides; 2) mitigate exposures that occur; and 3) inform employees about the hazards of pesticides. Initially, WPS was a very simple statement, workers were not allowed to enter the field until the sprays had dried or the dust has settled. WPS was amended several times before it was finalized in 1995, which resulted in a very complex rule that is difficult for the agricultural community, both by the farmer and the workers, to understand. The current standard not only includes workers performing hand labor operations in fields treated with pesticides, but employees in forests, nurseries, and greenhouses, and employees who handle (mix, load, apply, etc.) pesticides for use in these locations (U.S EPA, WPS Final Rule, 1992).

There has been a public/private partnership in place since 1995. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and agricultural associations have joined together to ensure that the farmers of the State of Florida are informed about what is required of them regarding the new the WPS rule. All entities have taken an active role in educating the agricultural industry in Florida about WPS. Florida Farm Bureau Federation (FFBF) has partnered with FDACS and IFAS in providing record keeping booklets, compliance kits, signs, and other materials as needed to growers and other employers.

Action Taken:

In 2000, FFBF conducted a study on WPS in Florida a five-year review. From our study we found that 80 percent of those surveyed are familiar with WPS; 49 percent have been inspected by FDACS; and 85 percent train their employees or use an employment service to facilitate training. To view the report in its entirety, please visit <http://FloridaFarmBureau.org/issues/wps.html>

The U.S. EPA wanted to determine if WPS has been implemented and if it is being enforced throughout the United States. The U.S. EPA conducted WPS Reassessment meetings across the country to evaluate the standard in 2000. The three WPS Reassessment meetings were held in Austin, TX; Sacramento, CA; and Orlando, FL

The grower participation at two of the three WPS Reassessment meetings was minimal. There were twice as many growers at the WPS Reassessment meeting in Orlando. Before this meeting, FFBF held a WPS Grower Recommendation meeting. The growers defined the problem areas within WPS and provided recommendations on potential changes that could be made to improve WPS. We presented these recommendations to the U.S. EPA. Our perspective is if changes are going to be made, Florida farmers should have the opportunity to provide their input so that positive, less burdensome requirements are placed on them. It is unknown at this time what changes, if any, will be made to WPS. FFBF has voiced our recommendations to the agency.