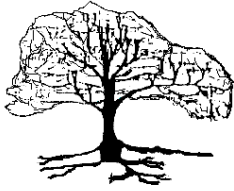


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**Statement on Revised Worker Protection Standard**

On September 28, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the revised Worker Protection Standard (WPS). Since then, CATA has taken the time to closely read and examine the new revisions in order to provide a clear analysis and position.

During the comment period on the proposed revision that took place last year, CATA provided thoughtful analyses and recommendations to lawmakers, individual experts, and other organizations to submit comments urging the EPA for better farmworker protections. As a result, nearly 200 CATA farmworker members and supporters submitted their own public comment on the WPS.

We recognize that some of the changes are an improvement to the previous standard. Employers are now required to give a pesticide safety training every year instead of every 5 years, as was the case in the old WPS. Also, the EPA has established 18 years of age as the minimum age for applying pesticides. The previous rule did not stipulate a minimum age. The new rule maintains the requirement of a central posting area for information about the pesticides being used, even though it was proposed to be eliminated. These changes do allow for more protections for farmworkers but will only be beneficial if they are enforced properly.

In order for the changes to be effective, responsible government agencies must have the capacity to enforce meaningful regulations and employers must also be held accountable for their actions. We advocate for more funds to be channeled to the enforcement agencies so that a sufficient number of inspectors can be hired. Inspectors must be bilingual and be able to speak Spanish and Creole in order to communicate directly with workers. We feel there should also be an increase in the number of surprise and random inspections at the farms and fines should be raised in order to discourage noncompliance. Also, enforcement agencies should work closely with community-based farmworker organizations in ensuring farmworker safety.

Exposure to pesticides causes farmworkers to suffer more chemical related injuries and illnesses than any other workforce nationwide, yet protections to workers afforded by the WPS are fundamentally inadequate. It is important to note that root-cause problems of farmworker's occupational exposure to pesticides will not be remedied, even with the revisions.

While it was important for CATA and its members to demand a stronger WPS, we do not believe that the WPS is an acceptable standard for protecting workers from pesticide exposure. We believe that the best method of risk reduction is to mitigate and eventually eliminate pesticide usage in agriculture. More support should be given to organic farming, Integrated Pest Management programs and other practices to facilitate the transition to toxic-free agriculture. Phasing out the use of pesticides is the only way to guarantee that farmworkers will not face the harmful risks that come from exposure. And this will not only benefit farmworkers, but will improve the health of farmers, consumers, and the natural environment as well.