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FARMWORKER JUSTICE'S STATEMENT ON EPA'S CERTIFICATION OF PESTICIDE APPLICATORS RULE

December 15, 2016—Washington, DC--Farmworker Justice is pleased that the EPA has [published](#) important changes to regulations that govern the certification, training and supervision of individuals who apply high-risk pesticides. The Certification of Pesticide Applicators rule (40 CFR 171), which has not been updated in nearly 40 years, provides national competency standards for those who may purchase and apply 'restricted use pesticides' (RUPs). A pesticide is classified as restricted if it poses heightened risk to people or the environment.

The new rule imposes stricter standards to protect human health and the environment and reduce risk to those applying pesticides. Currently there is wide variance among state certification and training programs for pesticide applicators, and requirements for supervision of non-certified applicators. We are hopeful that the new national standards will provide greater consistency in the knowledge and competency of applicators across the nation. In addition, those who apply pesticides aerially or by fumigation will have to demonstrate competency to use these application methods which pose high risk to applicators, farmworkers, surrounding communities and the environment.

Many farmworkers applying RUPs are non-English speaking, non-certified applicators who are applying these chemicals "under the supervision" of certified applicators. These are the applicators who are the most vulnerable to occupational injury from pesticide exposure. The vast majority are unable to read the application instructions and safety information printed on the pesticide labels, which are almost entirely in English. Although we are disappointed that the EPA does not require pesticide labels to have bilingual content, the revised rule requires supervisors to provide to non-certified applicators the label information about safety precautions and detailed use instructions in a manner and language that the non-certified applicator can understand. The revised rule also includes improved standards for supervision, establishes a minimum age of 18 for applicators, and requires non-certified applicators to receive pesticide handler and safety training in a language they understand.

We hope that the improved regulation will result in greater awareness by pesticide applicators of the risks they face, stronger protections from exposure, and ultimately, fewer pesticide-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths among farmworkers and their family members. Farmworker Justice will work with farmworkers to help them understand these changes and their right to a safe workplace and environment. We will also work with EPA to ensure timely implementation and strong enforcement of the new rule, and continued engagement with farmworker communities.