



CATA Trains Farmworkers About Pesticides

by Valerie A. Wilk

The Farmworkers Support Committee (known by the acronym, "CATA," for El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas) based in Glassboro, New Jersey, has developed a two-pronged pesticide training program for farmworkers.

According to Mark Lyons, Health and Safety Coordinator, one aspect of CATA's program is to train farmworkers to be health educators about pesticides. The "train the trainer" program teaches popular education methods so that trainers learn about and use the experiences of their farmworker audiences in the training. Such training is more egalitarian and effective. Farmworkers participate through role playing, skits, music, and stories using flipcharts.

Besides training new trainers, CATA also conducts pesticide health and safety workshops for its members using these participatory techniques. The goal of training farmworkers is to help them identify problems in the field and develop collective solutions to those problems. Three CATA farmworker trainers are conducting some 50 workshops for farmworkers in Puerto Rico and New Jersey this year.

CATA has written a pesticide education train the trainer manual in Spanish and a trainer's resource guide. The manual covers such topics as right-to-know, health hazards of pesticides, signs and symptoms of pesticide poisoning, first aid, field sanitation, how to protect yourself in the fields, and how to file a complaint.

Under contract with the New Jersey State

Department of Health, CATA staff created a comic book in Spanish called "Podemos Protegernos de los Pesticidas--Una Guía para los Trabajadores Agrícolas" ("We Can Protect Ourselves from Pesticides--A Guide for Farmworkers"). All of the CATA materials were developed using focus groups of farmworkers and then were field tested. The comic book is written at a fourth grade reading level. Additionally, Lyons has developed a pesticide curriculum and training materials for health care providers and has conducted 60-90 minute in-service trainings in New Jersey hospitals and migrant health centers also under contract with the State Health Department. The "Health Provider Guide to Evaluation of Pesticide Exposure of Farmworkers" is keyed to the EPA manual Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings.

Lyons reports that CATA is developing training materials for mushroom workers and will conduct 15 worker trainings in Chester County, Pennsylvania, this winter.

CATA trainers conduct train the trainer workshops for interested organizations. In June, for example, CATA trainers conducted their two-day workshop in Spanish for East Coast farmworker outreach workers in migrant health and legal programs.

For more information about these publications or training workshops, contact Mark Lyons, CATA, P.O. Box 458, Glassboro, NJ 08028 (phone: 609-881-2507).

Lawmakers Express Concern ...

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the environment. Everyone benefits when Government decisions are based on accurate data.

According to a League of Women Voters Education Fund report as many as 300,000 farmworkers become ill from pesticides annually. Information on the specific pesticides used is critical for the medical treatment of those who are exposed

to pesticides. When a farmworker arrives at a health clinic suffering from what might be pesticide poisoning, it is imperative that the health care personnel have immediate access to information on what pesticides the persons has been exposed to. Just as those who work in factories have the right-to-know what chemicals they are exposed to in the work place, those who work in the fields cultivating and harvesting this country's food have the right to the same information.