








Worker Health and Safety

EFI's Standards include indicators to protect worker health and safety. Many national and state laws require employers to evaluate risks and improve systems to reduce illness and injury.

What are the main risks to employee health and safety on produce farms?

	POOR SANITATION	Lack of drinking water can lead to dehydration & heat related illnesses. Bathroom & handwashing facilities insufficient for the number of workers, poorly maintained, or located far from worksites can cause illness, including communicable diseases.
	HEAT EXPOSURE	Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be deadly. Employees of all ages may suffer heat related illnesses when it is very hot and humid.
	SLIPS AND FALLS	Workers can fall from ladders, overhead platforms or into holes, slip on wet floors and ground or trip over obstacles in passageways.
	REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES (RMI)	Farmworkers perform many tasks that can cause serious injuries. Jobs may require repetitive use of the hands; awkward positions like bending or squatting; and moving heavy objects.
	PESTICIDE EXPOSURE	Pesticides and other chemicals can cause immediate and long-term serious illness. Pesticide handlers are most at risk, but other employees can also be exposed to pesticides, and expose their families.
	HAZARDOUS EQUIPMENT	Farmworkers often use cutting tools like knives that can cause severe injury if they are not used, maintained and stored properly. Hazardous machinery like tractors, forklifts and loaders have moving parts that can trap clothing or limbs. They can also move suddenly or roll over.
	EXCESSIVE NOISE	Farm employees often work in areas with excessive noise levels from tractors, chain saws, and other industrial machinery. Hearing loss may not be obvious at first, but it is permanent.

And how can we prevent them?








Usually, a combination of actions are needed to protect health and safety, including:

- Clear health and safety policies & procedures;
- Employee training, engagement & communication;
- Facilities maintenance
- Machine & equipment maintenance
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Your company already has health and safety protocols. The Leadership Team can support implementation of these protocols and engage all employees in identifying areas & proposing ideas for continuous improvement.

Examples of Actions to Reduce Risk

RISK AREA	POLICIES & PROCEDURES	TRAINING & COMMUNICATION	FACILITIES	MACHINES & EQUIPMENT	PPE
SANITATION 	Cleaning & maintenance protocols & schedule	Maintenance staff trained in proper cleaning & safe chemical handling Employee hygiene training & awareness	Reduce distance of sanitation facilities from worksites	Adequate number of bathroom & handwashing stations	Use of gloves and other protective equipment during cleaning.
HEAT EXPOSURE 	Procedures for excessive heat, such as earlier work schedule, more breaks	“Water, Rest, Shade”! Training on signs, symptoms & first aid. Warning posters in all languages	Sufficient cool drinking water & rehydration fluids located near worksites	Water coolers	Light colored clothing, hats, etc.
PESTICIDE EXPOSURE 	Written procedures for chemical handling, training & communication IPM plan to reduce use of pesticides	Train pesticide handlers in proper use, maintenance & storage Train staff to protect themselves & their families, such as re-entry protocols	Sprayed fields are marked with type of pesticide & re-entry date Mixing & storage areas are locked	Closed mixing and loading systems Products have labels & Safety Data sheets	PPE, including respiratory, eye, & skin protection is maintained, and used properly
SLIPS & FALLS 	Facilities inspection schedule (guard rails, platforms, etc.) Housekeeping procedures	Post warning signs Train workers on ladder, height & machine safety	Install guard rails, stair rails, warning signs	Supplies to mark wet floors & keep people away risk areas	Safety harnesses Safety belts on tractors
REPETITIVE MOTION INJURY (RMI) 	Evaluate all work processes for RMI risk and create and implement a risk reduction plan	Train employees about RMI & how to report symptoms & suggest work station improvements	Make adjustments to work stations to minimize risk of RMI	Substitute certain tools with ergonomic ones	Workers use back braces & other support devices
HAZARDOUS EQUIPMENT & MACHINES 	Policies and procedures include regular inspections, training on proper operation and use.	Training on equipment & machine safety, operation, maintenance & storage Warning signs on & around hazardous equipment and machines	Hazardous equipment & machine storage areas are locked	Regular maintenance & inspections Rollover protection installed on all tractors Safety covers on cutting machines	Proper PPE used when operating equipment Including to prevent limbs or clothes getting caught in machinery
EXCESSIVE NOISE 	Policies and procedures to reduce risk of hearing loss	Train employees on the risk of hearing loss and the proper use of PPE.	Install materials in walls & ceiling that reduce noise	Inspect machines Replace worn parts to reduce vibration	Ear protection used