

AGRICULTURAL LUNG DISEASE: A NATIONAL PROGRAM

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Occupational exposures to dust of agricultural origin are known to cause respiratory illness among farm workers. Several pulmonary responses have been described in different agricultural settings. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Division of Respiratory Disease Studies (DRDS), in Morgantown, West Virginia is involved in a nationwide agricultural program, emphasizing the study of respiratory illness among farm workers, as a foundation for preventing occupational lung disease through the development and dissemination of appropriate prevention strategies. Surveillance, research, and intervention are key elements of this research program. Our program involves many separate projects that are part of an integrated, multi-disciplined approach to the study of agricultural respiratory disease involving clinical evaluations, environmental exposure assessments, laboratory research evaluating biological disease mechanisms, microbiological characterizations of agricultural materials, animal exposure studies and epidemiological surveillance. NIOSH scientists at DRDS have been actively involved in the study of respiratory illness in a variety of agricultural settings including Dairy Farming (Silo Unloading and Bedding Chopping), Cotton Processing, Recycling, Mushroom Farming, Poultry Growing, Grain Harvesting and Storage, and others. NIOSH scientists are interested in learning about instances of respiratory illness among farm workers and have a Respiratory Disease Health Hazard Evaluation Program available, at no cost as a resource for farm workers. To request assistance or to provide information on the occurrence of respiratory illness among agricultural workers, call (304) 291-4203.

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