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The 2008 Saskatoon Declaration for the Health, Safety, and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers in Agriculture

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The 2008 Saskatoon Declaration for the Health, Safety, and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers in Agriculture

Proposed at the Sixth International Symposium:
Public Health and the Agricultural-Rural
Ecosystem, Saskatoon, Canada,
October 22, 2008

The agricultural sector is under intense global pressure to feed the human population. In industrialized countries, this has brought on a remarkable mechanization and increasing intensification of the production, but still including the need for manual labor. It also remains one of the most dangerous industries for the people involved as farmers, farm workers, and family members. During Sixth International Symposium: Public Health and the Agricultural-Rural Ecosystem, held in Saskatoon, Canada, October 2008, it was shown that injuries, diseases, and other health-related problems are still a major problem for this sector.

The health and safety of migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families is more alarming than ever in many countries around the globe. The levels of working conditions, housing, and access to health care for most migrant workers are way below the standard of modern humane society.

It is no longer acceptable that the food we eat and drink is produced at the expense of migrant workers health and sometimes even life. The four major themes addressed in this symposium have been: “*What we breathe*,” “*What we eat*

and drink,” “*How we work*,” and “*How we live*.” Now it is time to focus on migrant workers in these perspectives (*How they . . .*) and start actions for a change!

We, the participants of the Sixth International Symposium, discussed the tragic and alarming situation for migrant workers and their families worldwide, and we call for the following actions to improve this situation:

- Provide and maintain working conditions that meet the requirements of the existing legislation.
- Revise the legislation when needed so that the standard of working conditions in agriculture is comparable to other sectors.
- Provide training and education for migrant workers in order that they may work and live a healthy life and be a proud and skilled part of the food chain.

There is an urgent need for active support from our politicians, governments, authorities, and organizations as well as employers—on local, regional, and national levels, and in a global perspective.

With this declaration, we challenge everyone to join in the effort and work towards the goal of healthy and safe working and living conditions for migrant workers and their families in the agricultural sector—in order to get food produced with pride and honor.

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