

IMPACT

 University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Idaho Home*A*Syst Hispanic Farm Worker Training

The Situation

Spanish speaking farm workers and their families live in rural and small communities throughout Southern Idaho where there is often times direct exposure to ground and/or surface water that may be contaminated with nutrients, pesticides, bacteria, and metals.

In a recent study, public health inspectors have found that 3 of every 5 water systems that serve some 10,000 migrant workers across Washington State fail to meet public health standards. In addition, twenty percent of wells servicing 189 migrant labor camps had nitrate levels above the health standard (Idaho Statesman, Feb 1 2000). This news is very relevant, and raises concern for the state of Idaho. The Idaho Department of Labor estimates that 40,000 migrant workers currently work on Idaho's farms. Many of these farm workers have taken up seasonal or permanent residence with their families in Idaho.

These under-served communities are not aware of current water quality data, potential adverse health effects, and the impact their activities may have on their health and the health of local ground and surface water quality. Lack of awareness was due to the scarcity of Spanish language resource materials and bilingual/bicultural personnel trained in the area of water quality, source water protection, and water-related health risks.

Our Response

Under a United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (USDA-CSREES) grant, the Idaho Home*A*Syst Hispanic Farm Worker Training Program was launched. It was designed to inform and educate Southwest Idaho and Eastern Oregon Hispanic farm worker families about pollution prevention actions to protect water resource, drinking water quality, and their health using Idaho specific Spanish language Home*A*Syst fact sheets and household activity risk assessment materials. The Idaho Home*A*Syst Hispanic Farm Worker Program is a cooperative effort between the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension and the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation districts (IASCD).

The first objective of the program was to train bilingual farm worker resource personnel and public health officials directly involved with the Hispanic farm worker communities. Following the training, these people would have basic knowledge of water quality concepts, and they would know how to use the Spanish language Home*A*Syst risk assessment materials.

The second objective of the program was to provide outreach to households using the Home*A*Syst materials to help farm workers and their families understand the impact their daily activities may have



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on their health, on water resource health, and on drinking water quality. Daily activities addressed were pesticide storage and handling, wellhead protection, animal manure and silage storage, farm and home waste management, and proper septic system maintenance. Most important, farm workers and their families were provided with suggestions for alternate activities that are not harmful to their health and the health of the environment.

Achievements

Approximately 130 bilingual resource personnel from Southwest Idaho and Eastern Oregon were trained on basic water quality concepts, the Home*A*Syst program and on use of the assessment worksheets. Personnel were from the Farm Worker Resource Committees in Boise and Caldwell, the Migrant Education Advisory Parent Council of Southwest Idaho, Terry Reilly Health Services Advisory Council and two Migrant Head Start Centers in Caldwell, ID. As a result of these trainings, there were requests for Home*A*Syst materials for outreach efforts to over 30 individual farm worker families.

Outreach to Hispanic farm worker households was conducted in the Southwest Idaho cities of Payette, Weiser, Marsing, Caldwell, and Wilder. About 500 households were contacted either through group workshops or household visits. Prior to learning how to use the Home*A*Syst risk assessment materials, families were educated on water quality concepts, water quality health risks, and water use facts. Families were also provided with information on correct disposal and recycling household products. Follow-up with about 100 farm worker families indicated that they had made changes in their actions to help protect ground/drinking water quality.

Additional outreach included program visibility at large, multi-agency outreach fairs. Home*A*Syst Farm worker project representatives had a booth at the Farm worker Appreciation Day held in Caldwell, Idaho and at the Farm worker Health Fair held in Marsing, Idaho. As a result of these efforts, approximately 125 farm workers and their family

members were provided information about the project, information on correct disposal and recycling of household products, and the risk assessment materials.

The project also included media outreach. Media coverage of the project were a talk show on a local Hispanic radio station, and stories in *AgKnowledge* and *Programs & People*, two university-wide University of Idaho publications.

The Future

Workshops for Caldwell school district parents and for the Weiser Migrant Head Start were also organized for the fall of 2000. Bilingual resource personnel were supplied with Spanish Home*A*Syst materials for future outreach efforts. Funding has been sought to expand the program to South Central and Eastern Idaho.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The success of the project is largely due to the efforts of Maria and Delia Gonzales, farm worker advocates from Caldwell, Idaho. Other cooperators: the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation districts (IASCD), the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Idaho Legal Aid.

For More Information

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