

11/15/17

Testimony at public hearing on Oregon OHSA's Application Exclusion Zone for the Worker Protection Standard Rules

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Representing Oregon's faith community in solidarity with the human rights of farm workers and their families

Farmworkers are Oregon's most important workers, producing the food that sustains the life of all of us.

It is a moral failing that farmworkers do not enjoy many of the rights other workers enjoy such health and safety protections. In the richest country in the world, our farmworkers still face unconscionable working and living conditions.

For over sixty years, workers have found that the only housing available to them is too close to the orchards and fields where pesticides are applied.

This regulation will help farmworkers at least understand what is applied near where they live and bathe and eat, so that they are more prepared or at least able to get out the away of the spray.

However, we feel that there should be a 300 foot minimum no spray buffer constituting the Application Exclusion Zone. Under Oregon law, there is a 300 foot no spray buffer of commonly used agricultural pesticides that protects salmon and other endangered fish from pesticide drift.

Surely, the safety, health and human dignity of farmworkers and their family members, including children and others, should be afforded the same protections as we give to fish.

We need to also look at the housing regulations soon. We want farmworker housing to be built at least 300 feet away from the fields. We want farmworker housing that encloses their stoves and sinks so they don't have to eat near pesticide residue. We want better laundry facilities so they can keep their pesticide-covered work clothes separate from their children's clothes.

We want Oregon OSHA to put these rules to work, and strengthen protections of farmworkers as we have recommended here.

Thank you.