



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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March 1, 2024

Eric Thomas, Legislative Auditor
Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee
106 11th Ave SW
PO Box 40910
Olympia, WA 98504-0910

Dear Auditor Thomas:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee's preliminary report titled "Pesticide Safety Programs to Protect Farmworkers."

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I), and Washington State Department of Health (DOH) have collaborated to issue a unified response to the cross-agency recommendations in the report. Though each agency is providing its individual response, their positions and comments regarding the recommendations align significantly. The agencies are committed to ongoing cooperation in addressing the report's recommendations.

- ***RECOMMENDATION #1: WSDA and L&I should create a formal agreement to share inspection information that will support inspection scheduling, avoid duplication, and maximize resources.***

WSDA and L&I have a formal agreement for coordinating on investigations but have no formal agreements for sharing information about routine inspections. Doing so could better target resources and avoid duplicate inspections.

Legislation Required: None

Fiscal Impact: JLARC staff assume this work can be done within existing agency resources.

Implementation Date: April 2025

Agency Response: To be included in proposed final report.

AGENCY POSITION: WSDA concurs with the recommendation.

COMMENTS: WSDA and L&I are currently in the final stages of updating our agency's existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The updated MOU will include ways in which to coordinate action by the agencies for any investigations or inspections related to the Worker Protection Standard and to maximize the leveraging of resources and minimize duplicative actions. While we do not have a definitive timeline for this agreement to be finalized, it will become effective upon signature and will continue for 5 years with the ability to renew for an additional 5 years.

- ***RECOMMENDATION #4: WSDA, L&I, and DOH should define common outcomes for farmworker pesticide safety, develop plans to monitor, assess, and communicate their achievement of those outcomes, and leverage resources and information to improve prevention efforts and administer programs.***
 - Best practices in performance management direct agencies to:
 - Establish common, measurable goals and outcomes.
 - Develop plans to monitor, assess, and communicate progress to ensure accountability.

- Use the results of their monitoring to improve their efforts and leverage resources and information.
- If the agencies define their common outcomes, establish systems to monitor and measure performance, and share resources, they will be better able to protect farmworkers from hazardous pesticide exposures.

Legislation Required: None

Fiscal Impact: JLARC staff assume common outcomes can be established within existing resources.

Additional resources may be needed for implementation.

Implementation Date: April 2025

Agency Response: To be included in proposed final report.

AGENCY POSITION: WSDA concurs with the recommendation.

COMMENTS: WSDA, L&I, and DOH collectively recognize the importance of establishing common outcomes for farmworker pesticide safety. In agreement with the recommendations, our agencies commit to collaboratively developing comprehensive plans to monitor, assess, and communicate achievements in enhancing farmworker safety and health. Recognizing the challenges in measuring these outcomes, we are dedicated to leveraging our collective resources and information to significantly improve prevention efforts and efficiently administer our programs.

All three agencies have representation on both the Pesticide Advisory Board (PAB) and the Pesticide Application Safety Committee (PASCO) which provide a structured forum for conversation and collaboration. In addition, we hold monthly meetings between team managers of WSDA, DOH, and L&I, which complement our roles on those committees to facilitate in-depth discussions and planning. Adding focus to these sessions will ensure that our strategies are aligned and that we collectively address the complex aspects of pesticide safety in the agricultural sector. By pooling our expertise and resources, we aim to establish effective, measurable outcomes that reflect our commitment to protecting farm workers from pesticide exposure and enhancing overall safety standards.

WSDA is committed to reviewing our programs internally and pinpointing opportunities to allocate resources for farm worker protection. We value the insights provided by JLARC and eagerly anticipate putting their recommendations into action to enhance our support for Washington's farm workers. Our sincere appreciation goes to the JLARC audit staff for their diligent work and commitment to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Derek I. Sandison
Director