

Developing Worker Health Standards in Sustainable Agriculture (Panel Introduction)

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Sustainable agriculture aims at simultaneously maximizing long-term farm economic viability, environmental health, and societal interests. It is inconsistent with the philosophy of sustainability to achieve one or two of these objectives while ignoring or compromising the third. Too often in the past, worker health and safety have been overlooked. But societal values are changing and farm worker health is increasingly recognized as central to the long-term viability of the farm, as well as being a good thing for our communities. Ensuring worker health requires setting standards.

There have been some regulatory approaches to setting safe and humane workplace standards in agriculture. There have also been voluntary efforts to promote higher standards and practices. This panel discussed some of these voluntary methods, including market-based approaches like eco-labeling. Panelists discussed standard setting and certification from perspectives of farm workers, producers, scientists, and practitioners responsible for implementing a rigorous and credible program.