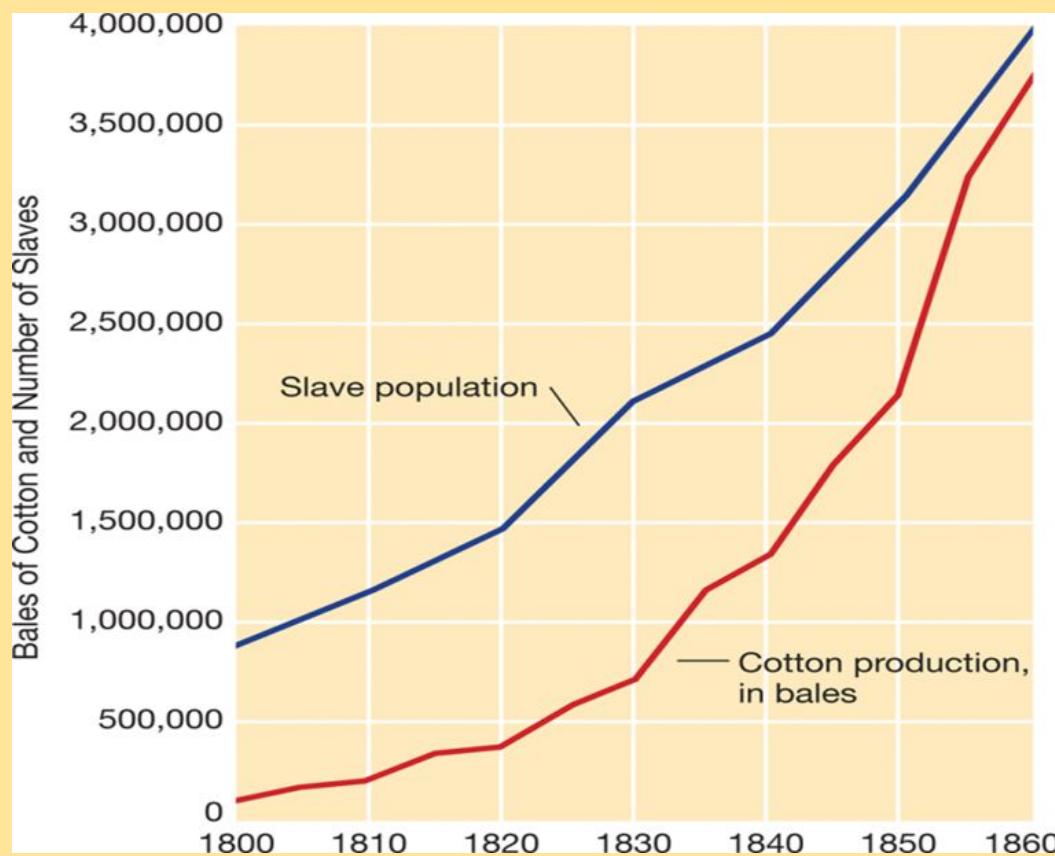


# ***H-2A Workers and Environmental Justice***



# Imported Labor Force

## Slavery and the Extractive Agricultural System



## First Bracero Program

(1917-1924)

## Second Bracero Program

(1942-1964)



# Labor Laws Excluded Farmworkers

NLRA (1935)

FLSA (1938)



nps.gov



bbc.com

# Farmworker Organizations in the US



# H-2A Visa Program

## Continue to Import Agricultural Labor Force





## Agricultural Land Erosion



## Climate Change



Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migrant Routes: Americas 2016, IOM Regional Office for Central and North America and the Caribbean and IOM Costa Rica, March 2016.



## Extractivism



## Political Instability

# Farmworker Immigration Demographics

- 73% foreign-born
  - 47% unauthorized
  - 31% US Citizens
  - 22% work visas
- NAWS
  - 11% indigenous from Latin America
- NCFH
  - 20% Indigenous community in Latin America



# Barriers Lead to Challenges to self-Advocacy

- Mostly Immigrants
  - Displaced
  - Mexico, Central America, Haiti
- H-2A Workers
- Language Barrier
  - Spanish
  - Haitian Creole
  - Indigenous Langs.
    - Mixtec, Mam, Tojolobal, Kanjobal



# FARMWORKER HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

## (Rural Health Information Hub)

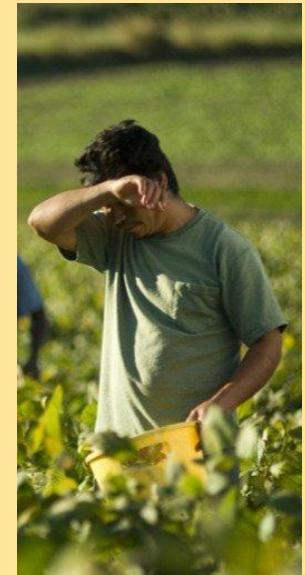
- Hazardous work environment
- Poverty and insufficient support systems
- Inadequate or unsafe housing
- Limited availability of clean water and septic systems
- Inadequate healthcare access
- Continuity of care issues
- Lack of insurance
- Cultural and language barriers
- Fear of using healthcare due to immigration status
- Lack of transportation



Image: FWAF

## Protections Needed

- Pesticide Exposure
- Heat Exposure
- Wage Theft
- PPE Provided
- Fair Wages





## Farmworker Living Conditions



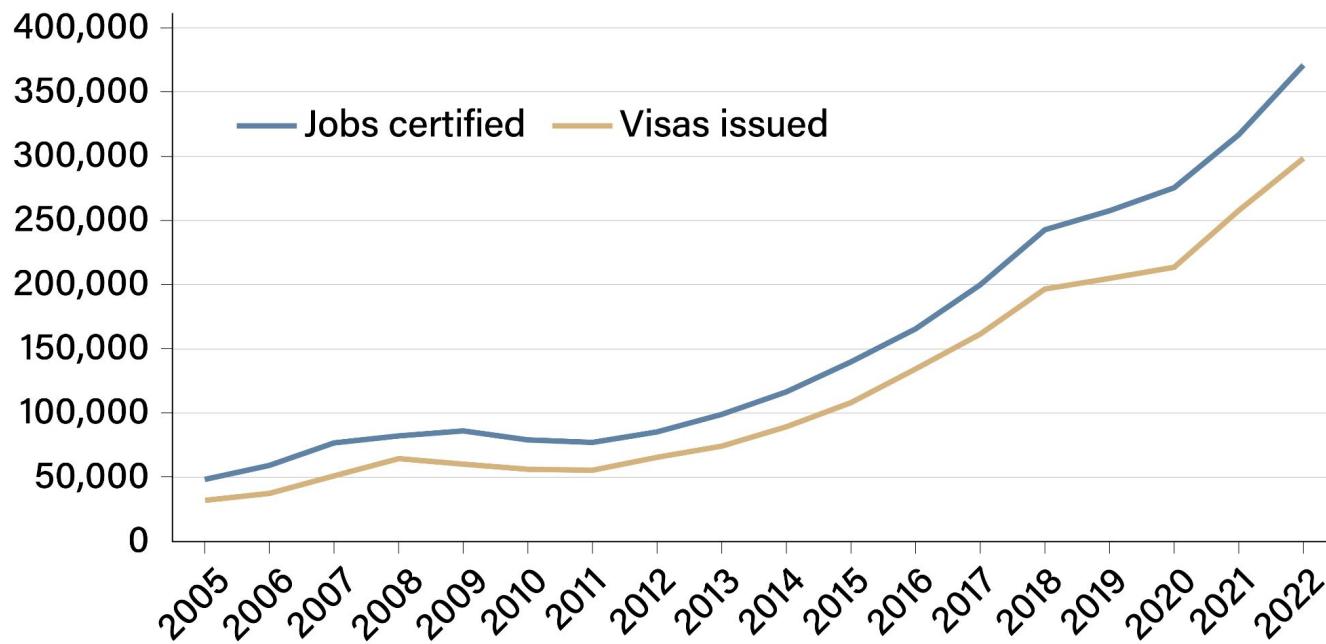
## Farmworker Housing



# Growth in H2A Certifications

The number of H-2A jobs certified increased more than sevenfold from fiscal years 2005 to 2022

Number of jobs or visas



Note: Around 80 percent of H-2A certified jobs result in visas issued to H-2A workers. Some employers do not follow through to hire the workers, and some H-2A workers fill two or more certified jobs.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of State.

USDA ERS 2025

# HEAT RELATED ILLNESS

Without protections, excessive heat exposure can lead to heat stroke – a dangerous condition that can cause permanent organ damage or death.



# Factor 1: Activity

**Your Activity**



CoolClips.com

Activities



Positions



Environment

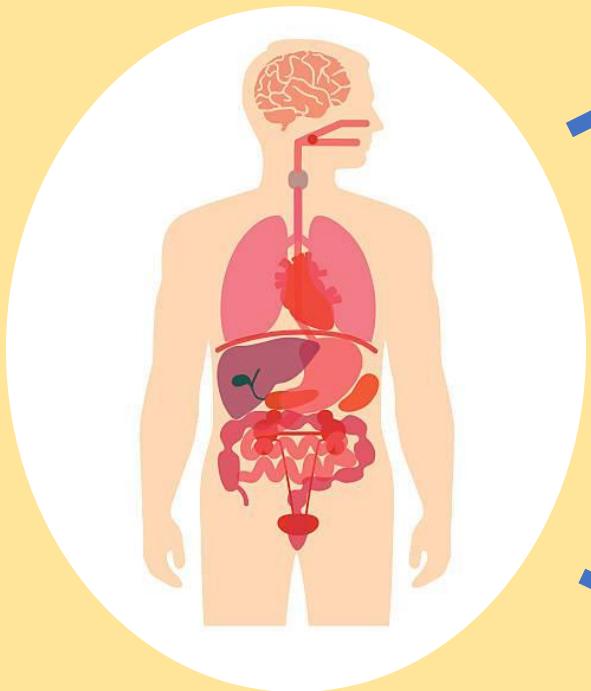


Duration



# Factor 2: Impact on Body

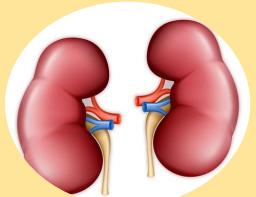
Your Body



Heart health



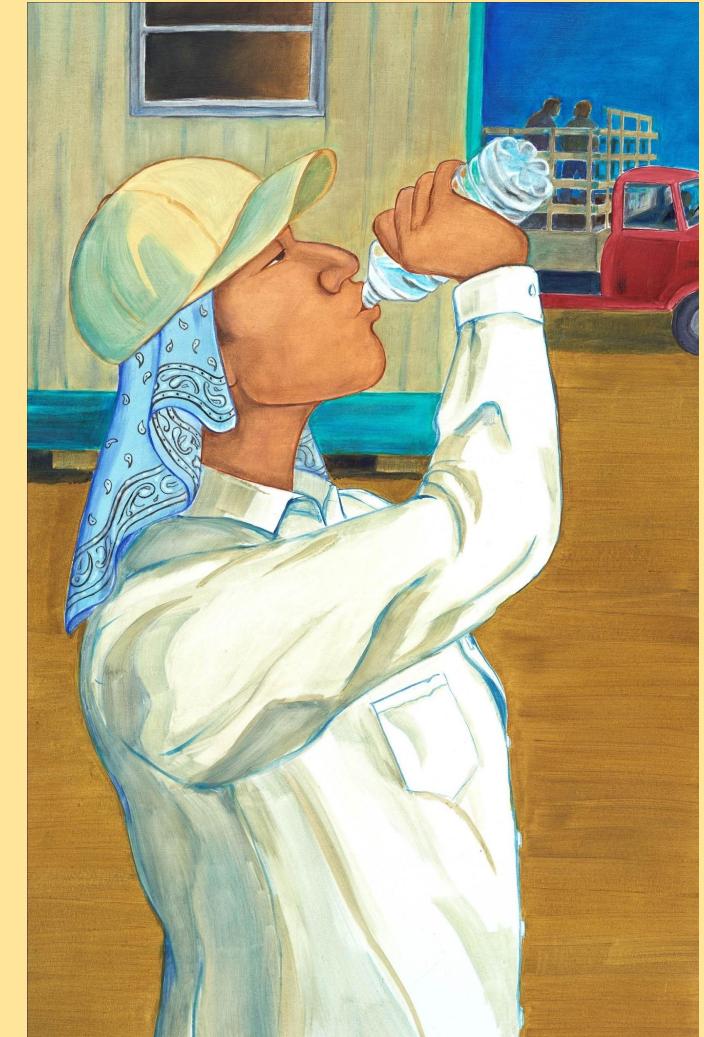
Kidney function



Temperature



Hydration

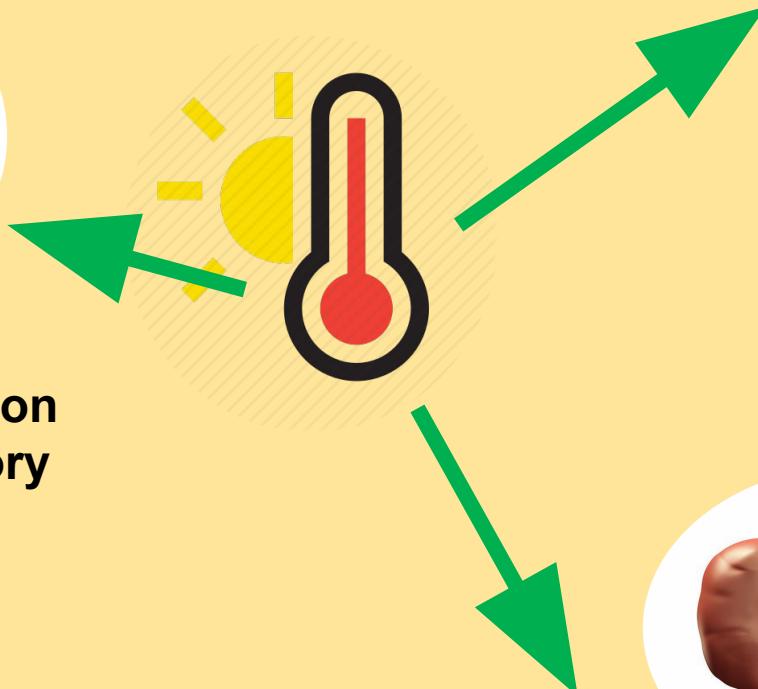


# How does too much heat affect the body?

Brain



- ❖ Lower concentration
- ❖ Poor memory
- ❖ Headache

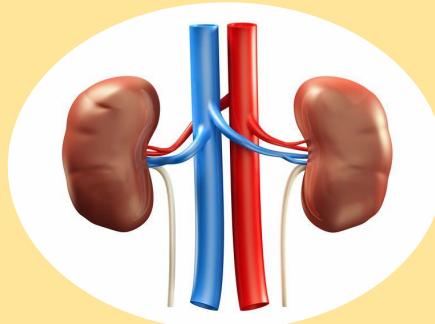


Heart



- ❖ Dizziness
- ❖ Fainting
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Low blood pressure
- ❖ Heart attack

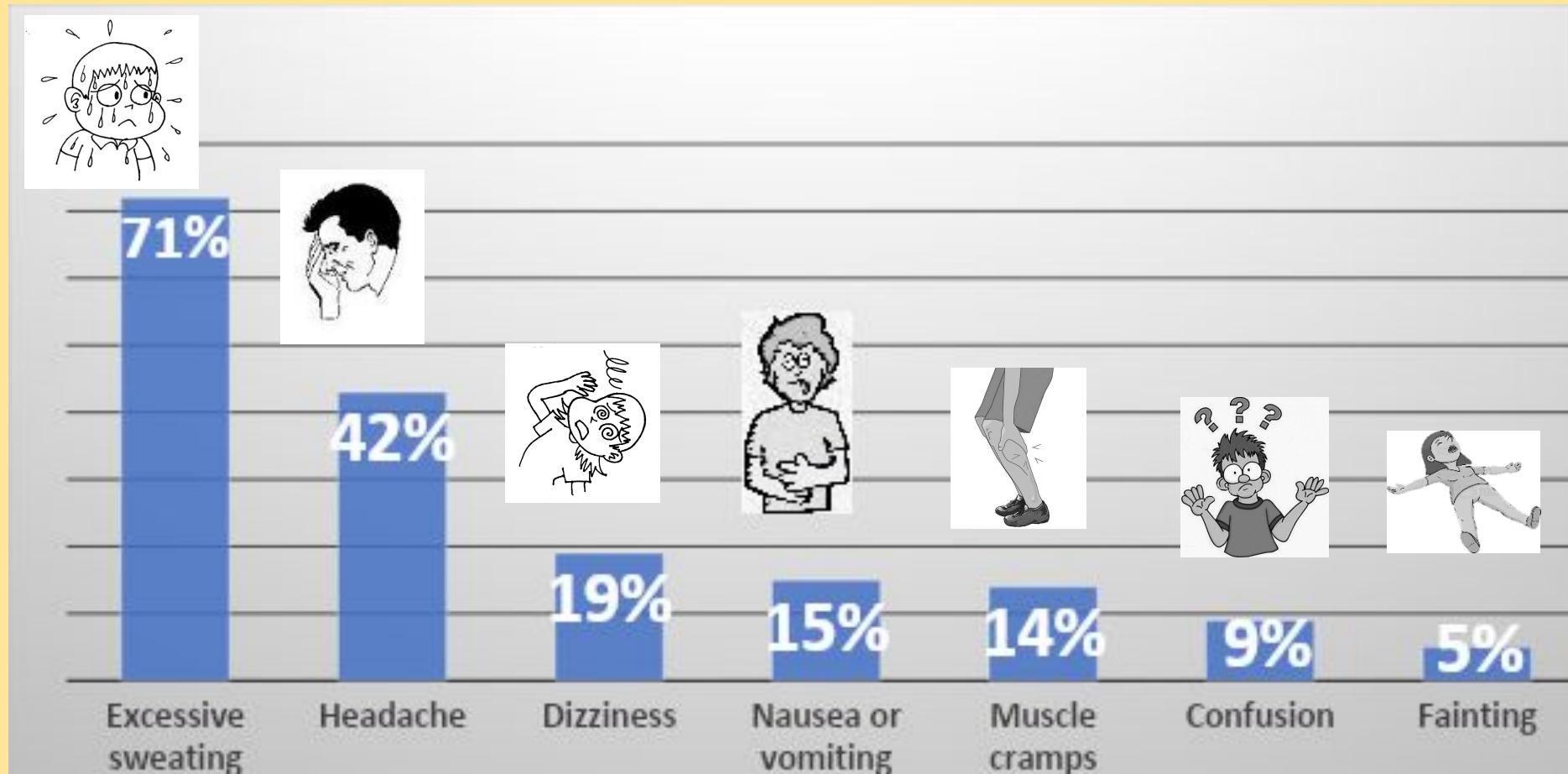
Kidneys



- ❖ Kidney dysfunction



# Heat-Related Illness Symptoms During Work



# Interventions



- ❖ Protection from pesticides?
- ❖ Not working during hottest part of day?
- ❖ Other interventions?

- ❖ Measure the impact of using cooling vests and bandanas to prevent heat stress
- ❖ Determine which other interventions, in addition to water, rest, and shade breaks, would help protect the health of farmworkers



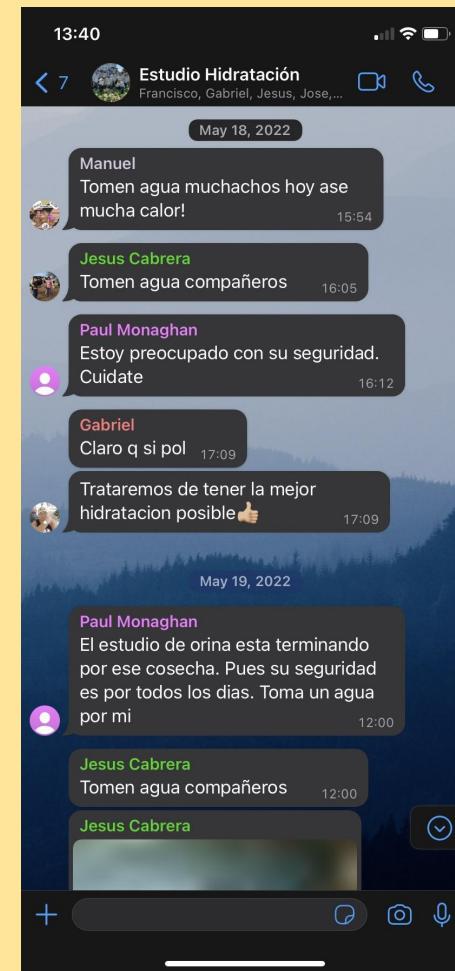
Farmworker Association of Florida  
La Asociación Campesina  
Asosiyasyon Travayé Laté



# Heat Related Intervention Study

*C&B Farms*

# Social Practices Interventions

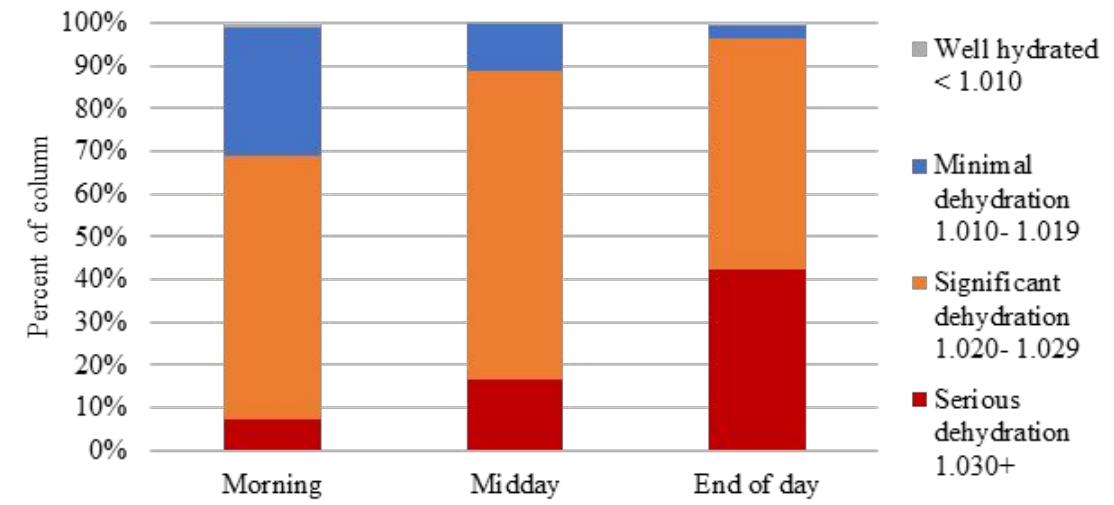
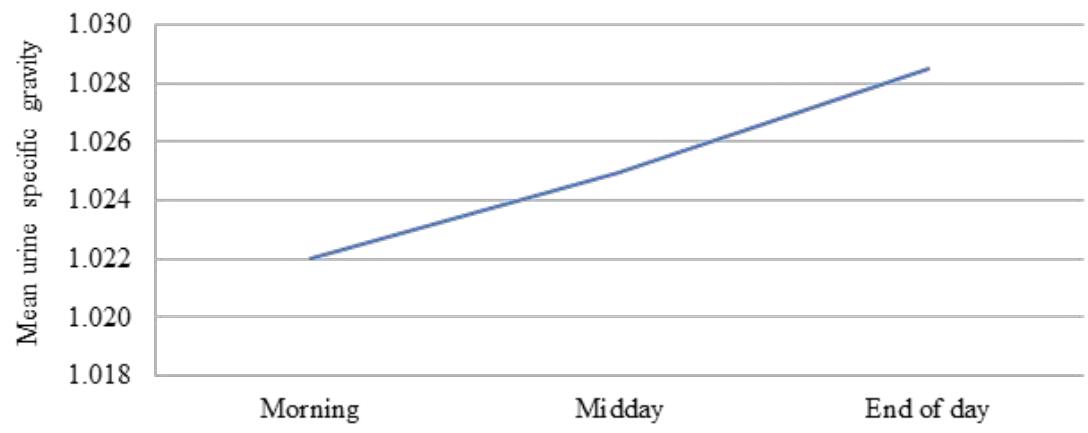


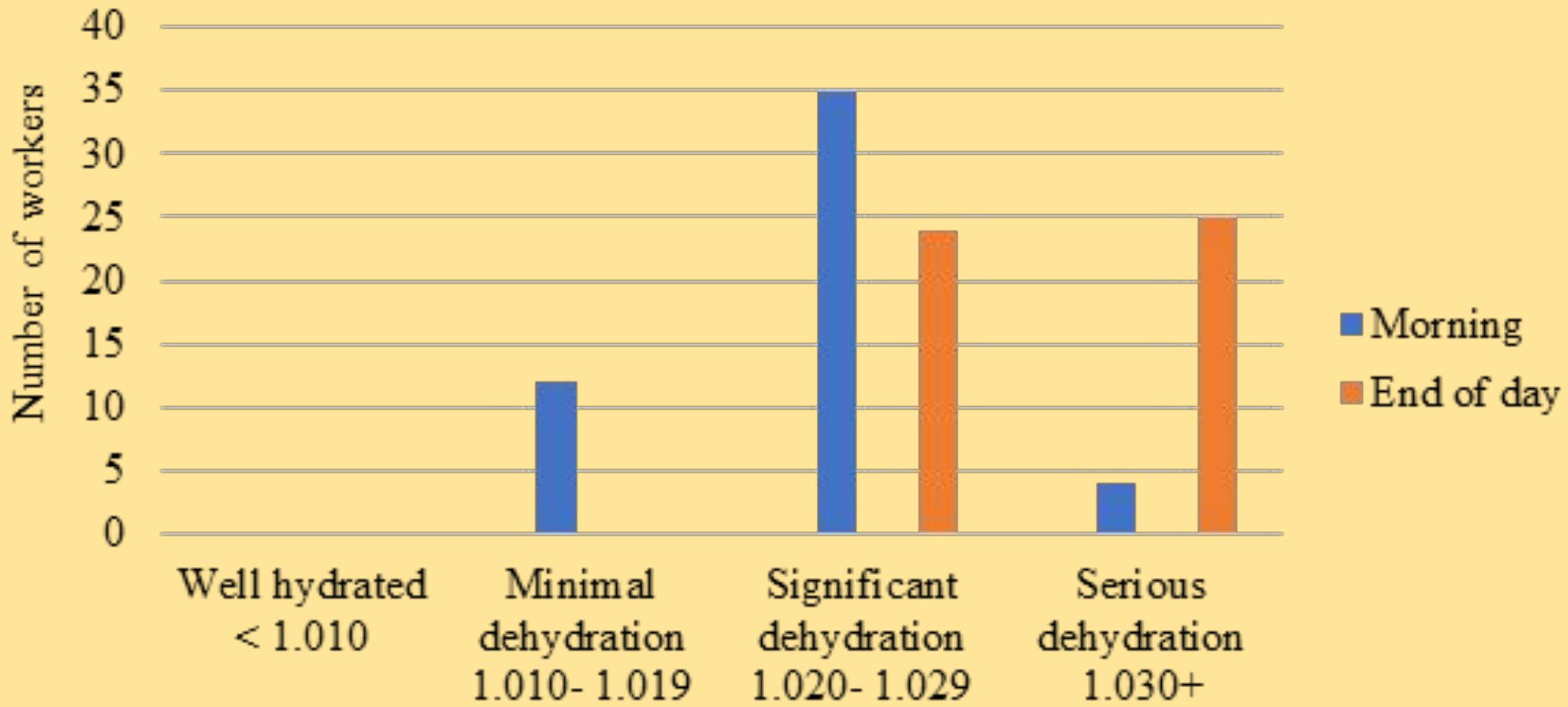
# Piece Rate System and Water Breaks

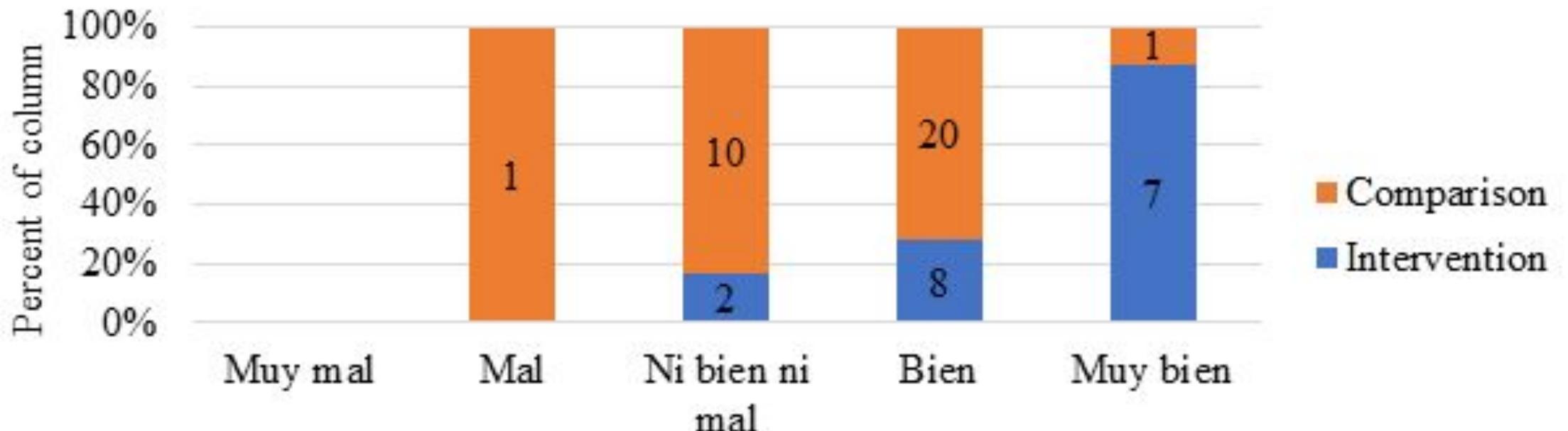
Worker: When you stop working, you don't just stop making money. The guy next to you is making what you would be making.

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System pitting workers in competition against one another.







# PESTICIDE EXPOSURE





Pesticide containers



Pesticide application equipment



Pesticide mixing and loading areas



Irrigation water and chemigation equipment

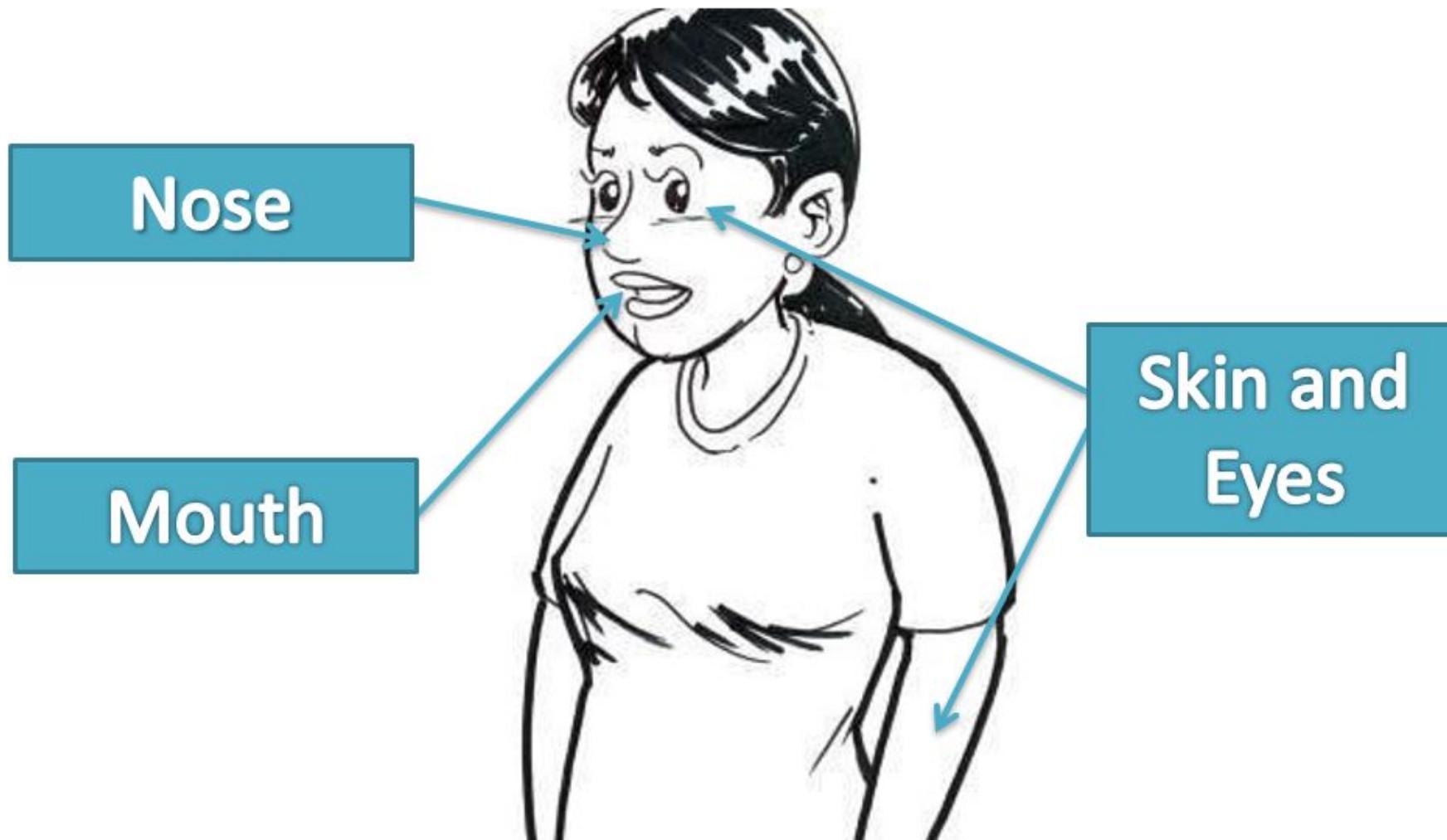
# Drift

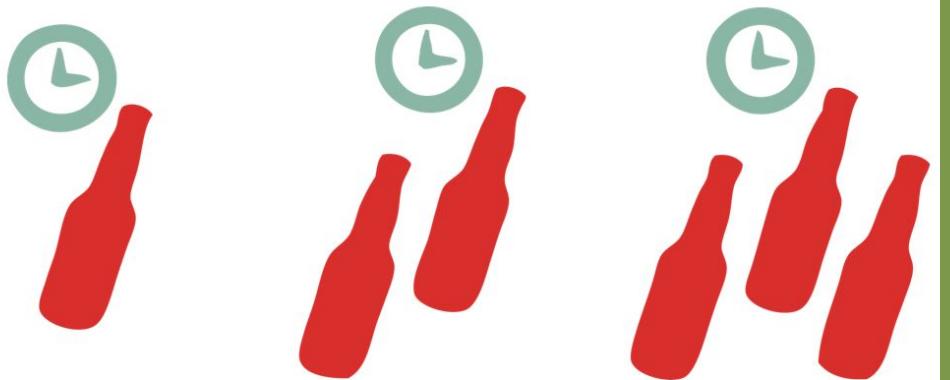


Treated plants, vegetables, fruits and soil



# How Pesticides Get in Your Body





Dose-time relationship

Other factors that impact how pesticides may harm you

- ✓ Type of pesticide
- ✓ Sensitivity
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Health condition
- ✓ Body size



Photo © earldotter.com

# Within a few hours...

IRRITATED EYES



DIZZY

HEADACHE



SKIN RASH



CHEST PAIN



CONVULSIONS OR  
EVEN DEATH

# Possible Effects Over time



# Worker Protection Standard (WPS)



**Worker Protection  
Standard (WPS)**  
**established in its current  
form in 1992 under the  
jurisdiction of the EPA**

# RELEVANT REGULATION AND LEGISLATION

1935	National Labor relations Act
1938	Fair Labor Standards Act
1962	Migrant Health Act
1970	Occupational Health and Safety Act
1983	Migrant and Seasonal Worker Protection Act
1986	Immigration Reform and Control Act—created modern H-2A program (updated 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act)
1992, 2017	Worker Protection Standard Rule (WPS)
2010, 2023, 2025	Adverse Effect Wage Rate AEWR Interim Final Rule Recalculates
2024	Improving Protections for Workers Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program
2021	Heat Standard for Indoor and Outdoor Workers (Ongoing, not yet finalized)



Image NARA

## Why This Matters

- Unless we pay fair wages for farm labor and afford workers the same rights and protections other workers get, we will always rely on an imported workforce
- Labor, migration, trade, and foreign policies are intricately intertwined
- Workers rights are not given, they are won
- Society is only as strong as its most vulnerable members



Image NFWM



EMORY

NELL HODGSON  
WOODRUFF  
SCHOOL OF  
NURSING



MIGRANT CLINICIANS NETWORK



THANK YOU  
and  
THANK FARMWORKERS

# QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS

