

USDA Grant to develop Youth Farm Safety curriculum

Written by Information submitted
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MINNEAPOLIS — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced funding to provide safety training for the more than 2 million youth working in agricultural production.

“Working on the farm or ranch is hard work, and it can also be dangerous,” said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. “By working together, we can be sure that young people in rural America have the opportunity to reap the many benefits of helping out on the farm, while also staying safe. Today’s grant announcement expands our ongoing farm safety partnership and will help further educate and protect young workers who represent the future of American agriculture.”

USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Ann Bartuska made the announcement at the North American Agricultural Safety Summit in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Dr. Bartuska noted “Agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the nation, as such, thousands of youth are injured and hundreds are killed every year by hazards found on the farm.” She continued, “As these youth play a vital role in the productivity of American agriculture, USDA has a responsibility to the education and resources needed to train youth in safe farming practices.”

USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awarded \$600,000 to Pennsylvania State University to develop a national training curriculum that lessens agricultural hazards to young workers. The training will align with Career Cluster Standards (CCS) of the National Council for Agricultural Education for a unified approach to a national farm safety education and curricula-certification program for youth. The project will establish a national steering committee to engage the Department of Education, Department of Labor, FFA, Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Ag Safety and Health Council of America, National Council for Ag Education and other relevant partners. The committee will work to identify curriculum and testing gaps, certification needs and industry-recognized credentials.

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Curriculum materials will be placed on the extension website in the new Ag Safety and Health Community of Practice to be used in both formal and non-formal settings. A national outreach strategy will promote use of the curriculum from youth and farm safety instructors to parents and 4-H youth programs. Additionally, the project will determine the resources required to sustain a clearinghouse for national youth farm safety and education curriculum, state certification requirements and testing.

NIFA made the award through the Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification (YFSEC) Program, which was established in 2001. Agricultural education is an important part of an individual's career and technical education. As such, it needs to provide instruction that leads to industry-recognized credentials. In addition, vocational agricultural program curricula need to be aligned with current career standards and curricula that integrate agricultural safety and health.

Through federal funding and leadership for research, education and extension programs, NIFA focuses on investing in science and solving critical issues impacting people's daily lives and the nation's future. More information is available at: www.nifa.usda.gov.