



# F.I.R.E

(Farmworker Immigrant/Indigenous Recovery Efforts)

# PROJECT





## Table of Contents

Part I: Introduction to F.I.R.E

Part II: Wildfire Survey Report by the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Part III: Farmworker Alert System Survey

Part IV: Community Organizing and Advocacy





# Part I: Introduction to F.I.R.E





# F.I.R.E



## Farmworker Immigrant/Indigenous Recovery Efforts

- 🔥 Advocacy
- 🔥 Recovery Efforts
- 🔥 Workers Rights
- 🔥 Community Empowerment
- 🔥 Outreach and Education
- 🔥 Resource Navigation
- 🔥 Research/Focus Groups
- 🔥 Civic Engagement
- 🔥 Emergency Preparedness

**We invite** community members, organizations, agencies, academics and public officials to join us in our efforts to engage and learn more about wildfire prevention practices. We strive to mitigate the dangers and fears that our neighbors and families face during fires by navigating resources and serving as a bridge to our community.

**Lidere Campesinas** represents a culmination of decades of work by farm working women (Campesinas). Together these long-time leaders and activists create a statewide network to coordinate and mobilize efforts aimed towards improving rural communities and becoming a more unified voice.

**Lidere Campesinas Sonoma - Napa** chapter was initiated in 2010 in Sonoma County. They continue to provide educational workshops, community outreach, and participate in civic engagement regarding various issues that impact farmworker women and their families. In collaboration with various organizations, we served as community health workers in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and address inequities.

**Looking for more leaders and ambassadors to join our efforts!**



KAISER  
PERMANENTE®



**Part II:  
Wildfire Survey Report by the  
University of Wisconsin-Madison**





Thousands of California farmworkers are facing multiple catastrophic events induced by climate change in the past three years more than ever before. Wildfires are dangerous climatic disasters because they generate hidden challenges, and like the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects among farmworkers are often underreported and misclassified. The risks posed by wildfires are growing as the chance of fire increases every year. In California, the frequency of extreme fire weather has doubled since the 1980s (Goss et al. 2020) and in the last twenty years, more than 600,000 acres of California wine country have burned (Krishnakumar 2019). Wine-country is expected to see more fires than any other region in the state in the next three decades (Krishnakumar 2022). The approximately 17,000 farmworkers employed between Sonoma County and Napa County (Martin 2016) are at especially high risk in these hotter and longer wildfire seasons.

Working during proximal wildfires purports to save agriculture production, such as wine grapes and dairy cattle, and provide national food security. It is during this time, however, that workers are at high risk for exposure to wildfire smoke (PM2.5), which can cause both short- and long-term health problems, including cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, hospitalization, and even death (US EPA n.d.). Hidden impacts might include loss of employment and housing, wage theft, and violations to evacuation orders. Previous survey findings suggest that nearly three-quarters of farmworkers are without employer-provided health insurance (T. Hernandez and Gabbard 2018), which makes seeking medical attention before and after a fire costly. The combined conditions highlight that understanding how wildfires affect farmworkers is ever more crucial. This report summarizes the findings from a new community-led survey aimed at measuring and assessing Northern California farmworkers' perceptions on wildfires and their impacts at work.

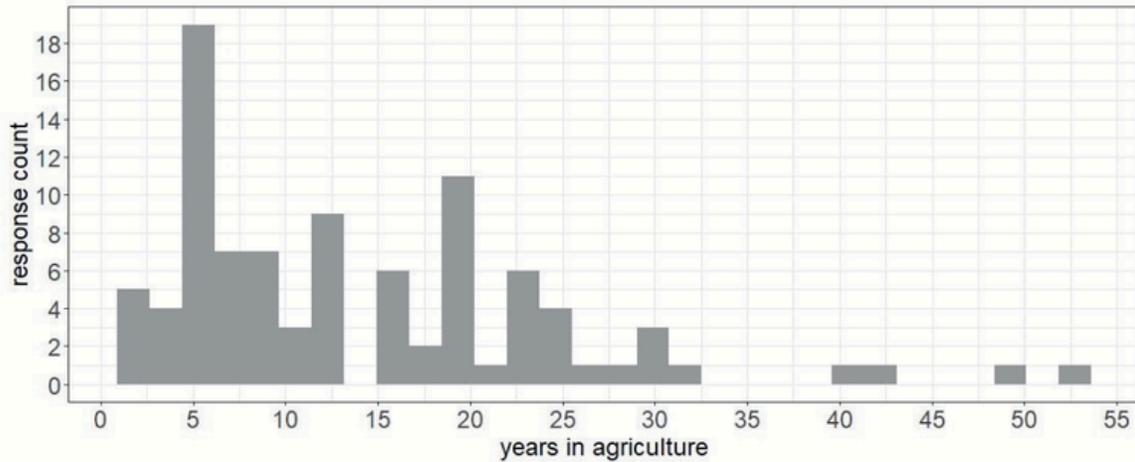


### Survey Overview

This survey was developed in partnership between the advocacy organization Líderes Campesinas and researchers at the University of Wisconsin - Madison in the Department of Community and Environmental Sociology. From May 25 to July 31, 2023, staff and volunteers from Líderes Campesinas distributed surveys to farmworkers in Napa and Sonoma Counties. Survey participants were compensated for their time.

## Survey Respondents

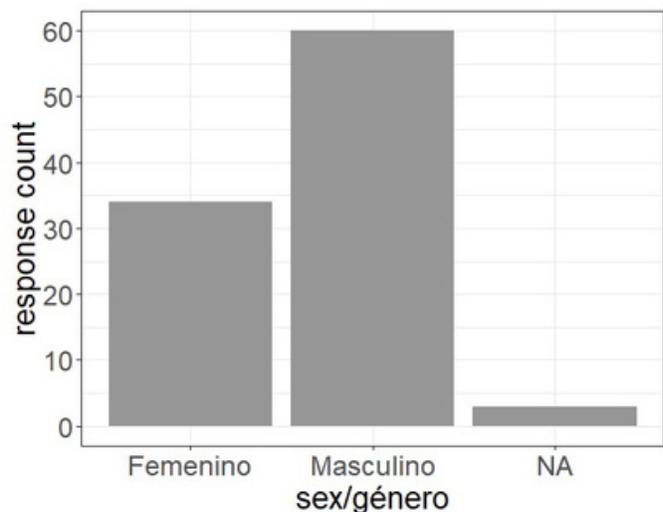
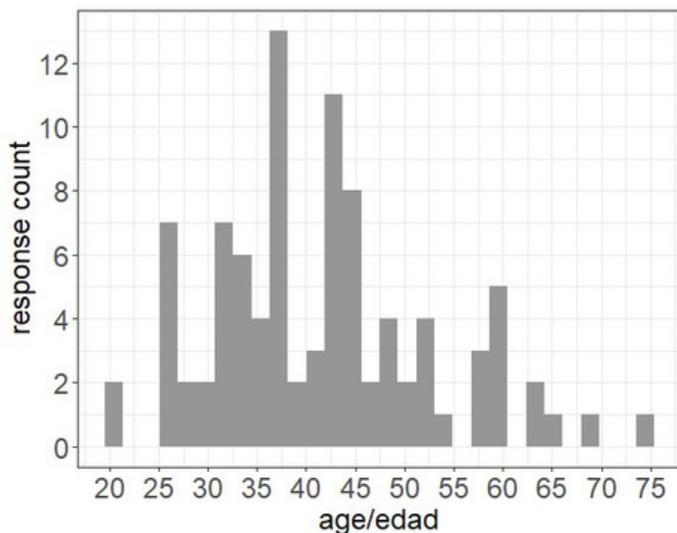
Ninety-seven (97) surveys were completed. A majority of respondents (92.78%) work in vineyards in Napa (29.90%) and Sonoma (68.04%) Counties. There are 37 questions in the survey. All the respondents work for at least one (1) agriculture company throughout the calendar year. The median number of years working in agriculture is twelve (12) years; the longest time reported was fifty-two years.



How many years have you worked in agriculture?

Participants report primarily speaking Spanish. Other languages reported include speaking English, Chatino, and Mixteco as secondary languages.

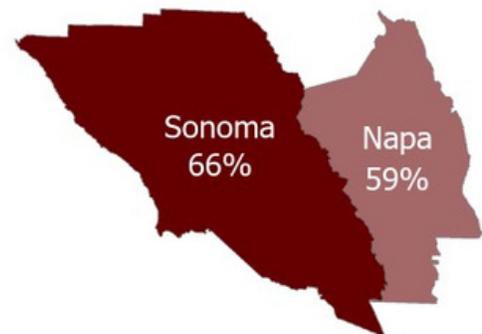
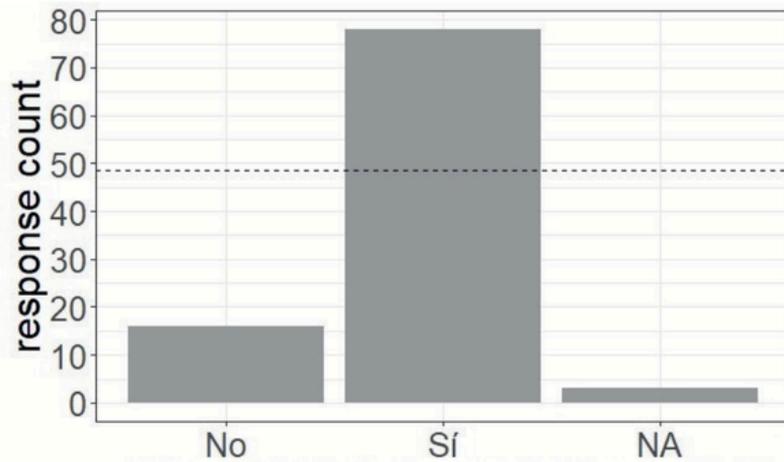
The median respondent age is forty-one (41). The age ranged from twenty-one (21) to seventy-five (75) years old. Thirty-four (34) respondents identify as female and sixty (60) identify as male. These demographics are comparable to national farmworker age and sex statistics ([National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc 2018](#)).



## Wildfires in the Workplace

Wildfires have affected more than two-thirds (80.41%) of the respondents. Among the respondents who report experiencing wildfires in the workplace, the median number of fires experienced is two (2), though this ranged from one (1) to six (6) times.

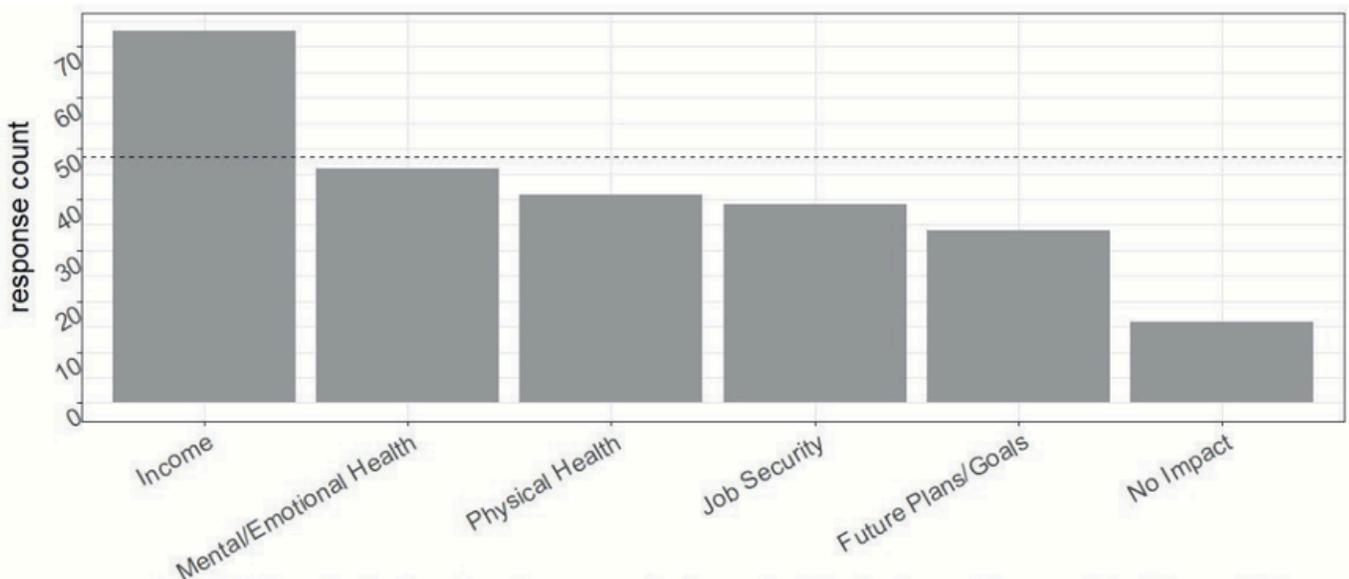
Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents who work in Napa County and sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents who work in Sonoma County name the wildfire they experienced while working in agriculture. The most mentioned fires are the Kincadee (2019) and Tubbs (2017) fires.



**Have you been affected by wildfires?**

## Wildfire Effects

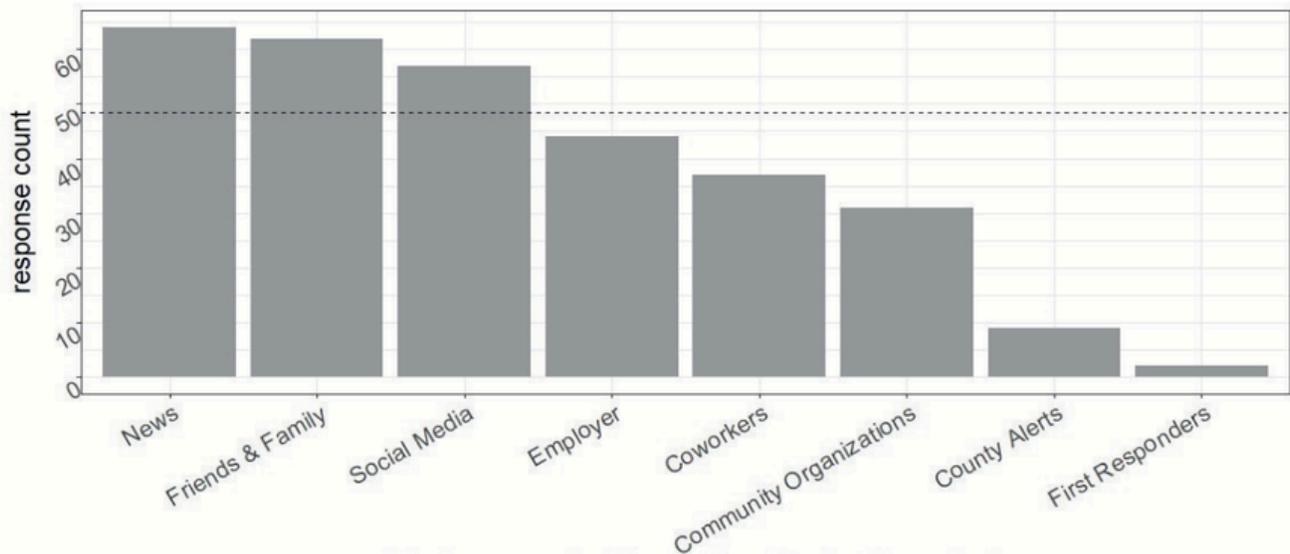
Approximately two-thirds of survey respondents report wildfires contributing to a loss of income. Additional impacts include mental and physical health, and concerns about job security and future planning.



**Which of the following describes how wildfires have affected your work or life?**

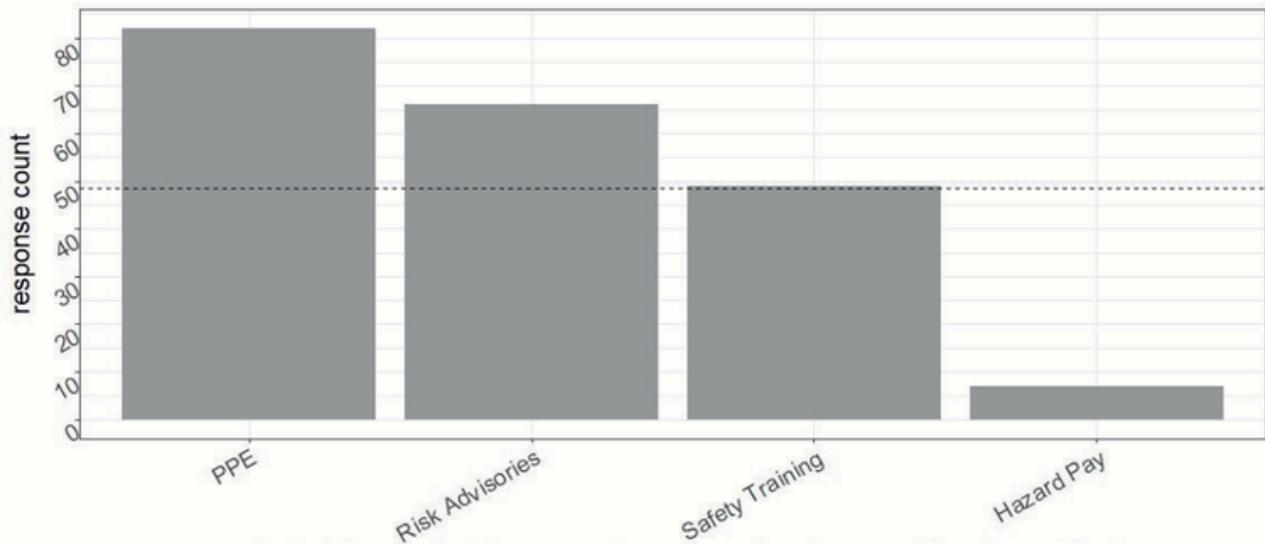
## Wildfire Responses

Approximately two-thirds of farmworker respondents received information about wildfires from the news, family and friends, and social media. Few reported receiving information from first responders and county alerts directly.



### Where do you get information about wildfires?

While working during a visible wildfire, more than two-thirds of farmworkers report their employers providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and risk advisories. About half say they received safety training, but very few respondents (7.22%) report receiving hazard pay.

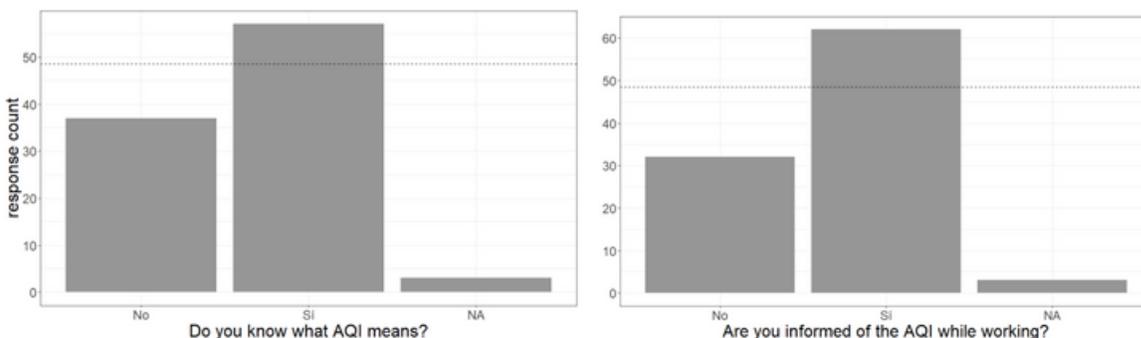


### Which of the following does your employer provide when there are wildfires?

## Wildfire Policy Perceptions & Experiences

### Air Quality Index (AQI) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Respondents report understanding the Air Quality Index tool and its use for work. AQI measures the amount of particle pollution (PM2.0 and PM 10) suspended in the air during a wildfire.



When asked if they have ever requested PPE while working during a wildfire – less than half (42.27%) report having asked for equipment, while more than half (51.55%) did not ask. Among those who did request PPE, some report employers giving masks and educating employees on how to use them, while others report not receiving masks or having to bring their own to use at work. One respondent wrote, “A veces nos decían que ya no había y que nosotros mismos lo consiguiéramos.” [Sometimes they told us that there was no more and that we could get it ourselves.] Approximately one-third (34.02%) report being familiar with AB73 - the 2021 legislation regarding the storing and distribution of PPE for outdoor farmworkers. More than half of respondents (59.79%) were not familiar with this policy.

### Evacuated Zones and the Ag Pass System

More than two-thirds of respondents have not entered an evacuated zone to perform work (73.2%). Yet nearly one fourth of respondents (23.71%) have entered evacuated zones. Among the workers who have entered, the median number of times worked in evacuated zones is two, though this ranges from one to ten times.

Very few respondents (13.40%) report feeling pressured by their supervisor to enter an evacuated zone to work. When asked what would happen if they refused a supervisor’s demand to enter an evacuated zone, responses varied widely from “nothing” to “being fired,” but roughly twice as many respondents believed there would be a negative response from their employer as those who estimated a more neutral response. In a particularly illuminating response, one respondent wrote, “No creo que me correrían al momento, pero no me considerarían como un buen trabajador.” [I don't think they would fire me right away, but they wouldn't consider me a good worker.]

Only about a quarter of respondents (27.84%) report being aware of the October 2021 legislation that sought to standardize the “Ag Pass” system across California (AB1103). More than half of the respondents (54.64%) believe there should be an Ag Pass system, as opposed to almost one third (32.99%) who believe there should not be such a system.

## Smoke and Health

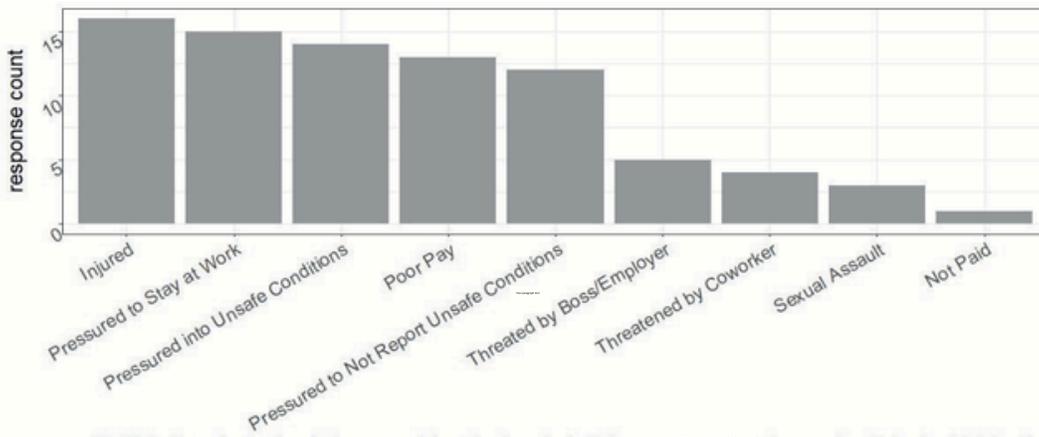
More than half of respondents (57.73%) report working in conditions with visible wildfire smoke, often for more than one work day. Of those who have worked in conditions with visible smoke, seventy-three percent (73.21%) worked for eight (8) or more hours. Of those respondents, nearly half (44.64%) developed symptoms of illness when they returned home and sixteen percent (16%) are still experiencing symptoms. Very few (16.07%) received medical care for exposure to smoke while working.



credits: (Larry Valenzuela, Cal Matters/CatchLight Local)

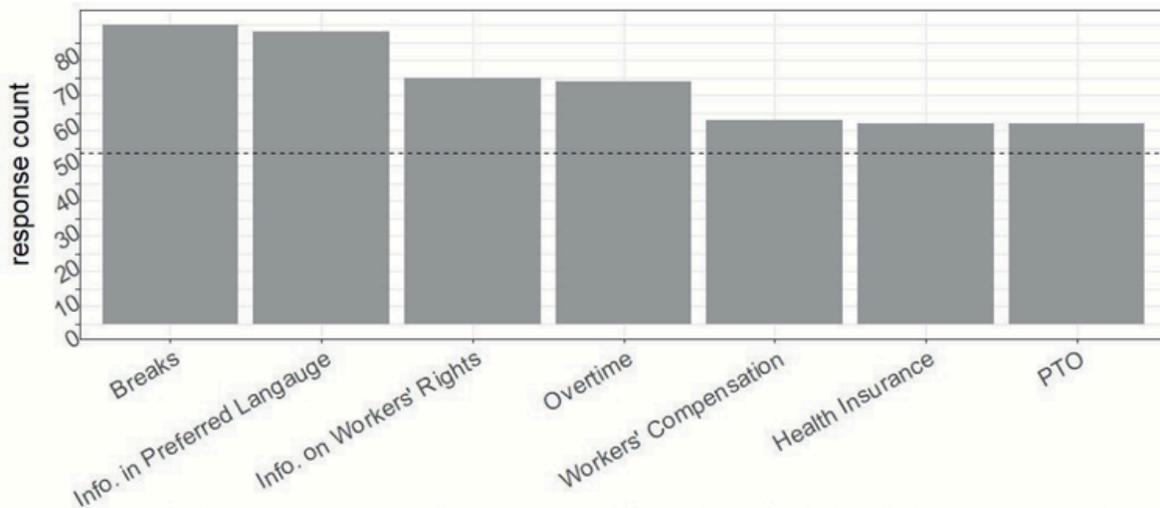
## Workplace Safety & Violence

Relatively few survey respondents report workplace violence, though it is apparent farm workers continue to experience illegal and unjust workplace behavior. Physical injuries from working and the pressure to remain working, even during unsafe conditions, were among the three concerns for their safety raised. Sexual Assault was not among the top concerns reported, but this might be due to the greater proportion of male respondents.



**Which of the following has happened to you while working as a farmworker in the United States?**

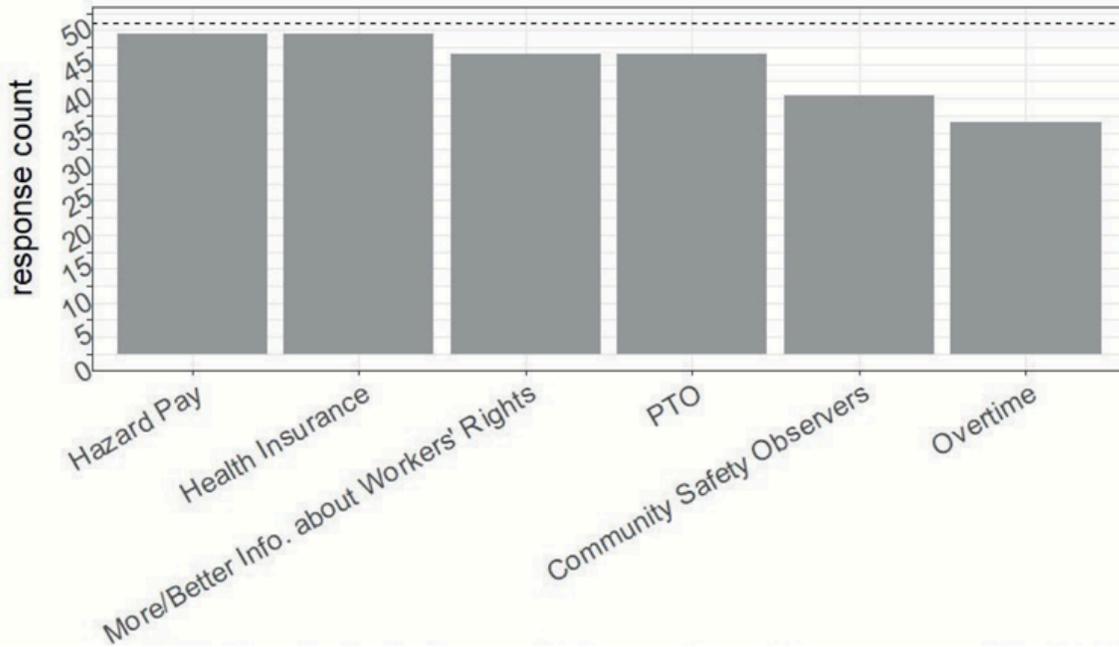
Most respondents report knowing how to make a formal complaint against their employer when their rights are violated. Taking breaks and having access to information in their preferred language were among the top two workplace rights identified. Fewer respondents feel comfortable asking for workers compensation, health insurance, and Paid Time Off (PTO).



**Do you feel safe asking for the following benefits or have you been given these benefits?**

## Opinions on Improvements in Workplace Safety

Respondents are relatively divided on what they believe would make the workplace safer. Hazard pay and health insurance were the top choices, though they were chosen by less than half of respondents. Other responses included more affordable health insurance, more information in workers' preferred language, and safety training.



**Which of the following would help you feel more safe at work?**

## Summary

This report summarizes the information gathered in a survey about how wildfires affect farmworkers in the workplace. It illuminates key observations of 97 farmworkers in the Sonoma and Napa counties who responded to questions about health, safety, and labor.

Policies about following AQI standards suggest that levels deemed safe for entering the fields can provide safe working conditions during a visible fire. More than half of the respondents report working in conditions with visible wildfire smoke, often for more than one work day. At the same time, nearly one third of respondents did not use the AQI as a tool at work. These findings suggest that even with air quality standards in place, workers are entering work sites without being properly informed about the dangers of smoke exposure.

Regardless of the use or misuse of the AQI standards, farm workers are laboring longer hours during visible wildfire smoke. Of those who have worked in conditions with visible smoke, seventy-three percent (73.21%) worked for eight or more hours. Long hours might account for the high rate of developing illness from smoke exposure. Nearly half of the respondents developed symptoms of illness when they returned home and did not receive medical attention. Sixteen percent (16%) are still experiencing symptoms from smoke exposure and are not receiving any medical interventions. Respondents identified hazard pay, health insurance, and better communication about the dangers at work as the top three interventions that could make the worksite more safe. These interventions could minimize the physical injuries acquired while working. Increasing wages would

also improve work conditions. Wildfires contribute to workers' loss of income, mental and physical health, and concerns about job security and future planning. Higher wages support workers to individually manage the cumulative effects of wildfires. Co-workers and community organizations, however, continue to be important sources of support for workers and provide a broader network of support during wildfires.



# F.I.R.E. Project

## Report of Survey 1

A summary of responses from farmworkers experiencing wildfires in the workplace

---

### Summary

- Goal: Assess and understand Northern California farmworkers' perceptions of wildfires and their impacts on work
  - From May 25 to July 31 2023, surveys were distributed to farmworkers in Sonoma and Napa Counties.
  - 97 surveys were completed
- 

### Wildfires in the Workplace

#### Effects:

- Loss of income
- Mental and physical health
- Job security
- Future planning

#### Response to wildfires:

- News, friends, family, and social media were the main reliable sources for learning about local wildfires
  - Few respondents reported receiving information about county alerts and first aid.
- 

### Perceptions and experiences about wildfire policies

***“Sometimes they told us that there were no more masks and that we should get it ourselves.”***

- Less than half (42.27%) reported requesting PPE while working during a wildfire
- Among those who requested PPE, “some report that employers provide masks and educate employees on how to use them, while others report that they do not receive masks or have to bring their own masks to wear at work.”
- More than two-thirds of respondents have not entered an evacuated area to carry out work (73.2%).
- Of those who responded working in conditions with visible wildfire smoke, (73.21%) worked for 8 hours or more

**AQI = Air Quality Index**

---

### Safety and Violence in the Workplace

#### Top 3 concerns reported:

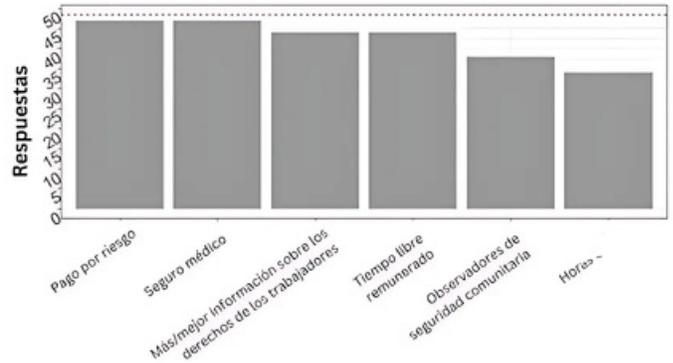
- Physical injury
- Pressure to keep working
- Pressure to work in unsafe conditions

#### Top 2 workplace rights respondents feel comfortable asking for:

- Taking breaks
- Access to information in the preferred language

## Opinions on how to improve job security

1. Payments for occupational risks
2. Health insurance
3. More information about labor rights
4. PTO (Paid Time Off)
5. Community safety observers
6. Payment for overtime



¿Cuál de los siguientes le ayudaría a sentirse más seguro en el trabajo?

## F.I.R.E. Project Alert System

Surveys focused on the smoke alert system in Sonoma and Napa Counties

### 3 SMOKE ALERTING SYSTEMS IN SONOMA-NAPA



#### SoCoAlert

- You may receive evacuation notices, shelter-in-place orders, boil water advisories, tsunami warnings, and flood warnings.
- Visit [SoCoAlert.com](http://SoCoAlert.com) to register online. If you prefer to register by phone, call (866) 939-0911 or (707) 565-1369



#### Nixle

- You can receive messages from local fire and law enforcement agencies that include public safety messages and emergency information.
- Sign up online to receive emails or text messages with alerts and notices.



#### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio

- This alert system is available to purchase at a relatively low cost.
- Basic alerts are sent, including forest fires.
- The message may be accompanied by a warning tone.

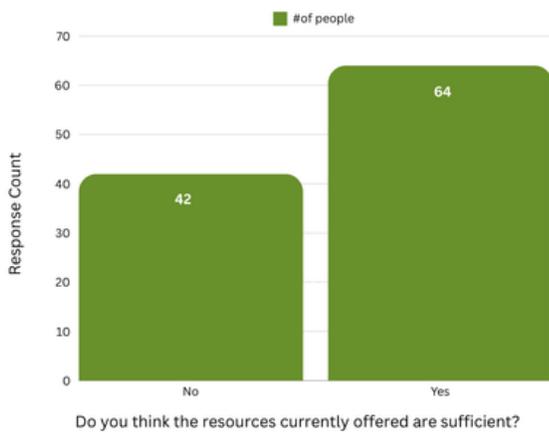
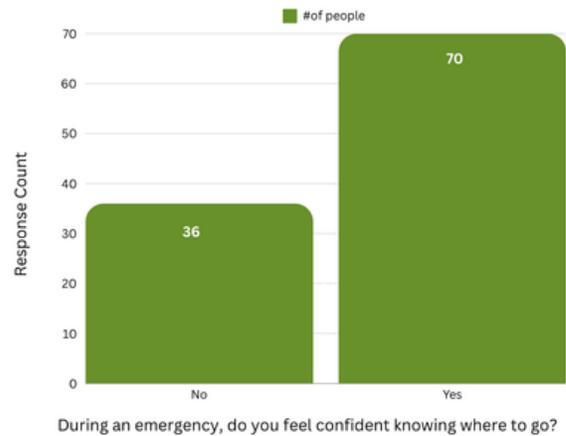
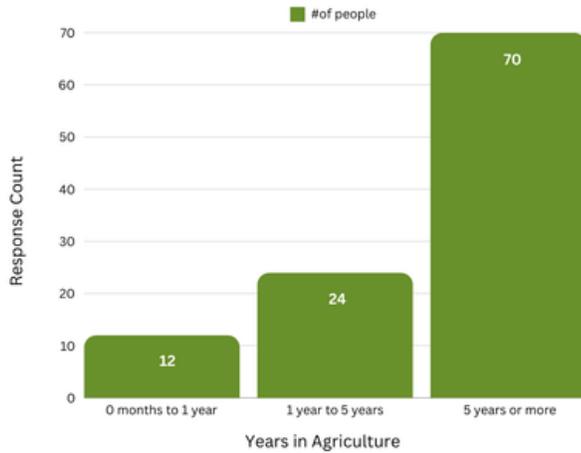


**Part III:  
ALERT SYSTEM SURVEY**

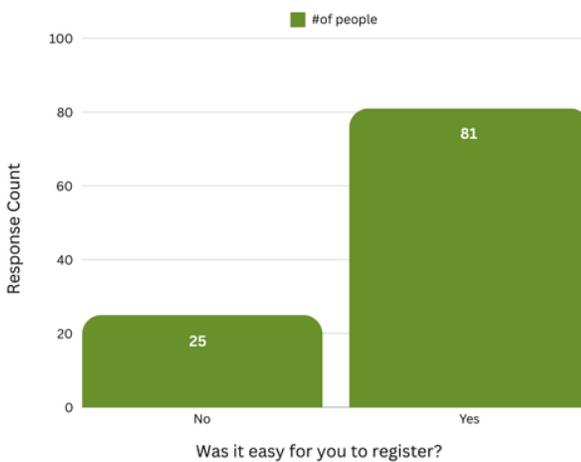


# Alert System Survey Conducted by Líderes Campesinas

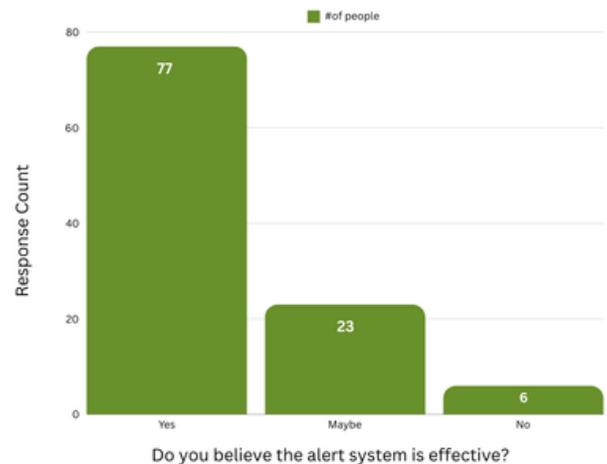
The members and staff of Líderes Campesinas Sonoma-Napa chapter conducted an informal survey amongst farmworkers in the Sonoma and Napa Counties where they were asked questions regarding the alert systems available to them in cases of wildfires. We acknowledge that our sample size might not represent the entire population of farmworkers in the Sonoma and Napa Counties. The data presented might reflect some inconsistencies due to informal methods used by our surveyors. Nonetheless, the purpose of this data is for the internal use of our organization to help disseminate, promote, and improve the alert systems that exist for the benefit of farm workers.



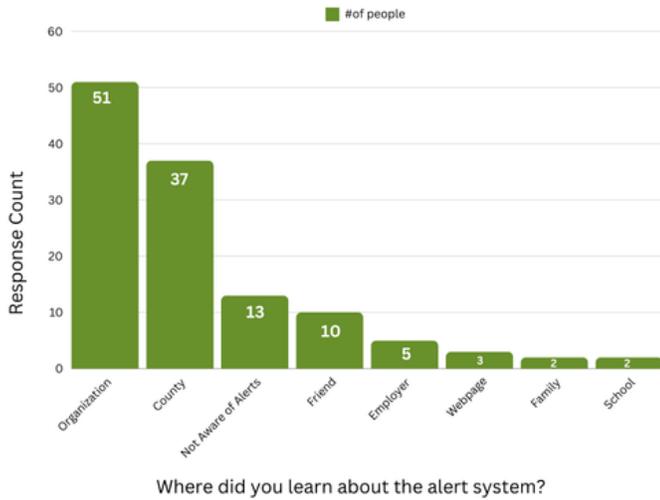
Out of the 106 people surveyed, 89 had signed up to receive alerts, while 17 had not.



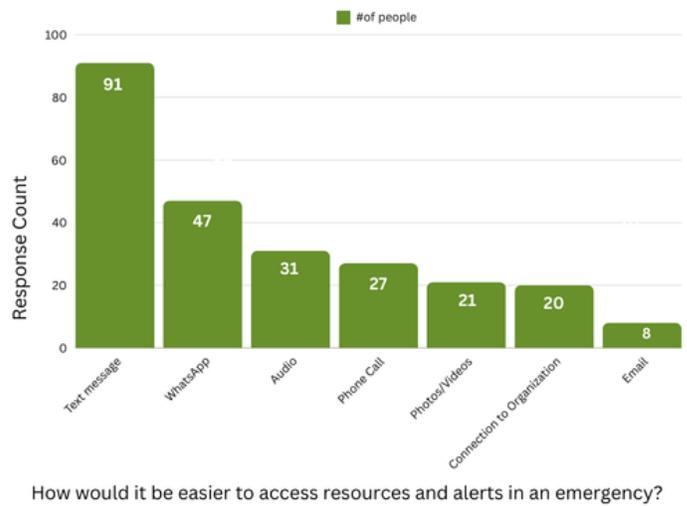
Our members and staff helped the 17 individuals that answered “No” in the previous question to register to receive alerts. Out of all the 106 people surveyed, 81 said it was easy to register, while 25 said it was not easy to register.



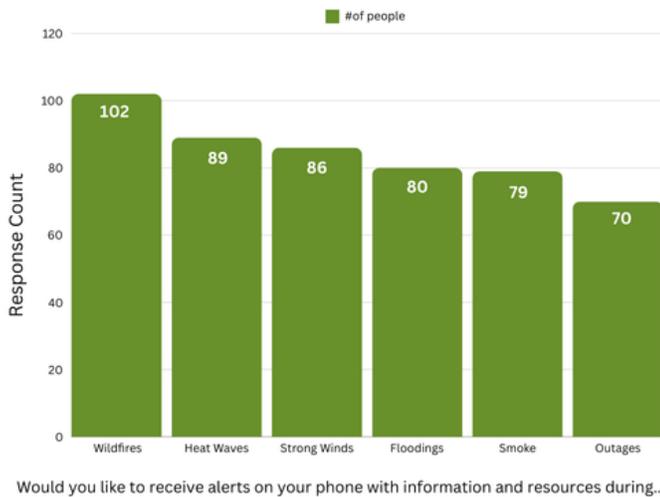
Out of the 106 people surveyed, 77 believe the alert system is effective, while 6 believe it is not effective. 23 individuals are inconclusive on the effectiveness of the alert system.



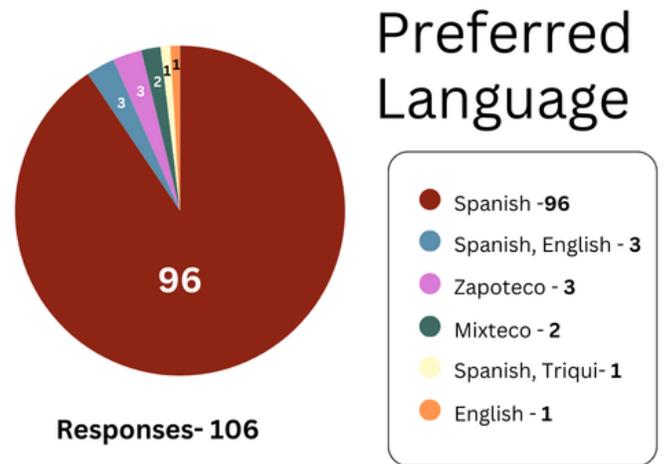
For this question individuals were asked to select all the options that applied. Most individuals responded that they learned about the alert system from an organization. County came in second place.



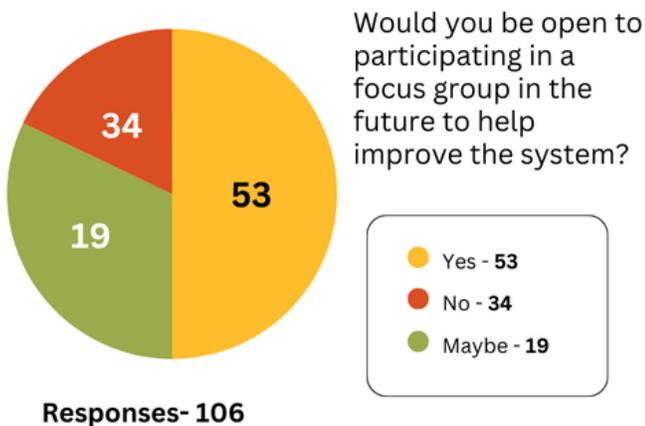
For this question individuals were asked to select all the options that applied. Most individuals responded that they would like alerts through text messages.



For this question individuals were asked to select all the options that applied. Most individuals responded that they would like to be alerted about all the options that were provided.



Individuals were asked in what language they preferred to receive alerts from the alert system. The majority answered they would like the alerts in Spanish; however, a small portion preferred various other Indigenous languages, such as Zapoteco, Mixteco, and Triqui.



Would you be open to participating in a focus group in the future to help improve the system?



# Farmworker to Farmer Transition Report of Survey 2

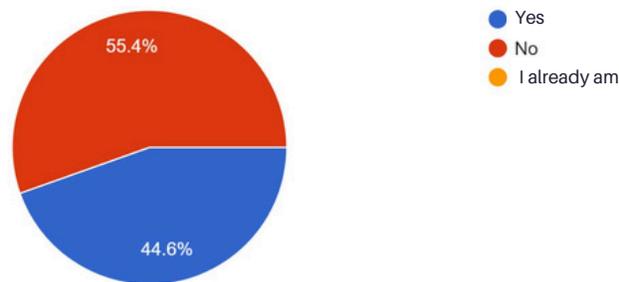


# Farmworker to Farmer Transition Survey

There were a total of 91 workers in the agriculture or vineyard industry interviewed by Líderes Campesinas' members in Sonoma County. We supplemented a more extensive survey about working conditions and fires with a couple of questions assessing their interest in starting their own farms. None of the respondents are current owners of an agricultural business, nonetheless about half showed interest in becoming one. Similarly, slightly more than half would like to be part of focus groups or training in this regard. The topics of highest value for the workers were Agriculture followed by other trade jobs and financial education.

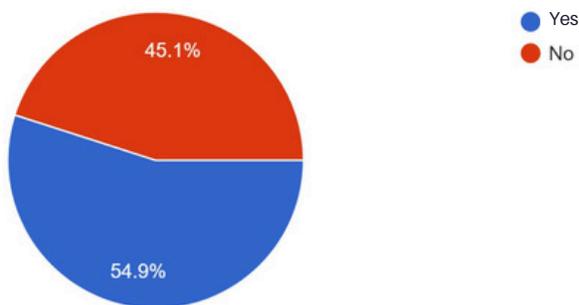
Would you be interested in owning your own business as a small farmer?

92 responses

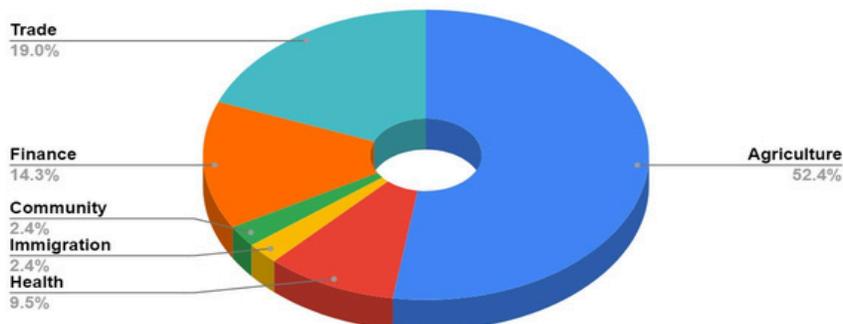


Would you be interested in focus groups or training sessions?

91 responses



## Topics





# Part IV: Community Organizing & Advocacy



## Leaders in Action

How Líderes Campesinas is working towards solutions:

- Panels
- Collaborations
- Surveys
- Outreach
- Focus Groups
- Learning more



### LEARNING



### INFORMING



### EMPOWERING

## COLLABORATIONS WITH AGENCIES AND THE COMMUNITY

- North Bay Jobs With Justice
  - fight economic and racial justice for workers on the front lines of climate change
- North Bay Organizing Project
  - address issues of fair housing, immigration, education, transportation justice and community equity
- Botanical Bus - Clínica de Hierbas Móvil Bilingüe
  - work with Latino and indigenous communities in vineyard workplaces and family service centers to provide bilingual and bicultural health services (ex: diabetes prevention and care, clinical nutrition and herbalism)
- Northern California Coalition for Fair Immigration Reform
- California Rural Legal Assistance



Botanical Bus  
Bilingual mobile herb clinic



Sonoma County  
**COAD**  
Community Organizations Active in Disaster



# Policy & Advocacy



## SB 1030

CWOP  
California Workplace  
Outreach Project

→ Seeks permanent funding for outreach and community engagement through nonprofits and other groups.

**IN PROGRESS**

## Prop 4

→ Authorizes bonds for drinking water, wildfire prevention, and protection of natural communities and land from climate risks.

**CA BALLOT MEASURE**



## 2024 California Bill Updates

### AB 2240

Migratory Agricultural  
Workers (Arámbula)

→ Would make the 24 migratory farmworker housing centers available year-round, preventing housing insecurity and interruption of children's education.

**SIGNED**



### AB 3035

Farmworker Housing  
(Pellerin)

→ It would expand the existing streamlined administrative approval process for agricultural worker housing in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties. A cap of 36 housing units will increase to 150 in those Counties.

**SIGNED**



### SB 1105

Paid Sick Leave :  
Agricultural Employees ;  
Emergencies (Padilla)

→ Would allow California farmworkers to use their paid sick leave during climate-related emergencies (wildfire smoke, heat, flooding).

**SIGNED**



### SB 227

Unemployment: Excluded  
Workers Program (Durazo)

→ This bill would require, no later than March 31, 2025, the department to develop a detailed plan to establish a permanent Excluded Workers Program to provide cash assistance similar to unemployment insurance benefits to unemployed workers who do not They are eligible for unemployment insurance due to their immigration status.

**VETOED**



### SB 1016

Latino and Indigenous  
Disparities Reduction Act  
(Gonzalez)

→ Requires state departments to collect and disaggregate data for indigenous Mesoamerican and Latino population groups in California

**SIGNED**



### SB 583

Salton Sea Conservancy  
(Padilla)

→ Would create the Salton Sea Conservancy, tasked with coordinating the management of all conservation projects in the Salton Sea region to restore the shrinking sea and reduce the negative impact the sea imposes on the health of local communities.

**SIGNED**



### AB 1864

Pesticides: Agricultural Use  
Near Schoolsites: Notification  
and Reporting (Connolly)

→ Would require farmers to submit requests to county agricultural commissioners for authorization to use pesticides within a quarter-mile of a public or private school.

**SIGNED**



### AB 1963

Pesticides: Paraquat  
Dichloride (Friedman)

→ Would require the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to complete a reevaluation of paraquat dichloride by January 1, 2029 and make a decision to withhold, cancel or suspend its registration, or impose new restrictions on the use of pesticide products containing the active ingredient.

**SIGNED**



### AB 1840

Home Purchase Assistance  
Program: Eligibility

→ It would have allowed undocumented immigrants to apply for first-time homebuyer assistance through the California Dream for All program.

**VETOED**



## Guardian Vital

The Vanguard and Líderes Campesinas are collaborating on a wine label to draw attention to vineyard workers/stewards. Those who pick grapes are often in the shadows, are subjected to hazardous working conditions, and do not have job security or opportunities for advancement in the wine industry. The Guardian Vital label will be adopted by wineries for special cuvées.

A percentage of sales from the cuvée will benefit Líderes Campesinas, an organization whose mission is to strengthen the leadership of farmworker women and youth so that they can be agents of economic, social, and political change and ensure their human rights. The participating wineries must guarantee that workers whose labor goes into making their wines have safe workspaces, are paid fairly, and are treated with dignity, respect, and potential.



# Thank You



Scan the QR code to access this report