

# The Price They Pay, for the Price We Pay

The effects of pesticide use and work accidents on the health and safety of migrant agricultural workers in Israel

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Thank you to Julia Altmann, Anat Ben-Dror, Richard Prescott, and Matt Taunton

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Worker's Hotline  
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## Introduction

As awareness increases about the harmful effects of ingesting chemicals that are in our produce, so does awareness about pesticides and their threat to our health. In Israel specifically, the general public continues to ingest fruits and vegetables with pesticide residue which are banned from export to Europe or the United States for this precise reason. However, the subject of how agricultural workers and their health suffer due to the nature of their work - such as spraying pesticides - remains under the radar and unaddressed. Despite clear regulations about this and general safety at work, migrant agricultural workers in Israel continue to work and live in sub-standard conditions that threaten their short and long-term health and safety. Additionally, there is a severe lack of enforcement in circumstances when employers fail to uphold standards regarding pesticide use and safety at work, yet continue to exploit workers for production and profit.

For years, we at Kav LaOved - Worker's Hotline have known that migrant agricultural workers spray pesticides as part of their job in the fields, often without any proper training or protective equipment. The State Comptroller's Report, published shortly before this report in May 2017, further confirmed our stance: the situation in regards to pesticide use is extremely disturbing and reflects a disregard to workers' health and in fact lives.

The State Comptroller's report<sup>1</sup> shows there is no effective enforcement; no updated regulations regarding pesticide use have been set forward for effective training and instruction; and it is in this reality that there is nothing easier than to violate the current safety regulations. The report stresses that the inspectors of the Ministry of Economy (which are today under the authority of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services) have difficulties reaching the agricultural worksites in order to perform inspection; in cases in which inspection does occur, it rarely results in sanctions for employers violating safety regulations.

In 2016, Kav LaOved filed complaints to the Ministry of Economy on behalf of 94 workers (employed by 26 individual employers) about failure to comply with pesticide regulations in relation to training and protection equipment. Data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs shows that annually around 300-350 inspections take place, in workplaces in which about 1,500 workers are employed out of about 80,000 agricultural workers total.<sup>2</sup> The numbers are expected to drop in 2017 due to a reduction in staff due to budget cuts.

Given this concerning phenomenon, and relatively limited information about it, Kav LaOved conducted an online survey in the Thai language in January 2017 to hear directly from workers about their experiences with pesticide use and work accidents. Over 150 workers participated in the survey. This report will briefly describe the sector and these issues, present the findings of this survey, and make recommendations to governmental authorities to ensure the health and safety of migrant agricultural workers in Israel.

The title of the report, "The Price They Pay, for the Price We Pay" refers to this trade-off: migrant workers sacrifice their health and safety, while we consumers benefit from the low market prices that their labor affords us. The results of this study show us how and how many migrant agricultural workers sacrifice their health and safety in order to receive their daily wage, and in order to keep the Israeli agricultural sector running.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report\\_425/acdfe4f3-7bc6-48b5-b602-7cf3200380b0/2017-67b.pdf?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](http://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_425/acdfe4f3-7bc6-48b5-b602-7cf3200380b0/2017-67b.pdf?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.3919046>

## Migrant Agricultural Workers in Israel

In Israel today around 22,000 migrant workers are employed in the agricultural sector full-time, with a maximum contracted working period of five years and three months. 85% of these workers are between the ages of 21 and 40.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of these workers come from Thailand through the bilateral agreement the Thailand-Israel Cooperation (TIC), which was initiated in July 2012. According to the Population and Immigration Authority (PIA), in 2016 there were 668 women migrant agricultural workers, comprising 3% of the total group.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, there are around 350 seasonal workers from Sri Lanka who are employed for four to eight months at a time, who are also recruited through a bilateral agreement between their government and Israel.

The conditions under which migrant workers are employed in the agricultural sector in Israel makes them one of the most vulnerable groups in the work force. First, they live and work full-time on farms, which are often extremely isolated and hence their living and working conditions are hidden from sight. Most often, the workers do not speak Hebrew or English, resulting in limited to non-existent communication with employers, private agencies, and the authorities.

Lack of minimum wage, overtime payment, and social rights is widespread among migrant agricultural workers. Out of the workers who turn to Kav LaOved, on average they earn only 70% of the wages they deserve according to law.<sup>5</sup> According to Kav LaOved's estimation, the average worker works approximately 309 days a year. If there are 22,000 Thai workers employed in Israel, and if the numbers sent by workers to Kav LaOved in complaints reflect the general state of the sector, we have estimated that the loss of revenues of migrant agricultural workers amount to half a billion shekels (NIS) a year.<sup>6</sup>

The Immigration Authority and the Ministry of Economy are the bodies responsible for enforcement of the rights of migrant workers in the agricultural sector. Because of this structure, inspectors from both bodies are called to farms following a complaint by workers. However, in many cases the inspectors without the ability to communicate with the workers who made the complaint and thus check the veracity of the complaint only by speaking to employers. Without adequate translators or a way to communicate directly with workers or hear their complaints, government inspectors are unable to understand the exact conditions of their employment. This means that enforcement is systematically ineffective.

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<sup>3</sup>Chrome-extension://oemmndcbldboiebfnladdacbfmadadm/http://israel.agrisupportonline.com/news/csv/files/6194.pdf

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/foreigners\\_in\\_israel\\_data\\_2016/he/foreigners\\_in\\_Israel\\_data\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/foreigners_in_israel_data_2016/he/foreigners_in_Israel_data_2016.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Matan Kaminer and Noa Shauer, "Below the Minimum: Non-Enforcement of Wage Law as a Structural Element in the Agricultural Sector in Israel" (Kav LaOved 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## Pesticide Use and Safety

Pesticides are used in the agricultural sector to kill unwanted plants and insects to ensure consistent output of produce for the employer. This means that pesticides, by definition, are toxic chemicals with the capacity to harm those who come in contact with it. Agricultural workers, who mix, prepare, and spray pesticides, “face greater risks of becoming poisoned by pesticides because they work with pesticides at their greatest concentrations and strengths.”<sup>7</sup>

Extensive studies show that pesticides can have short-term and long-term impacts on human health, from acute to severe implications. Workers exposed to pesticides may have issues with their nerves, skin, or eyes; they may experience headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue during or after exposure. In terms of long-term health issues, pesticides have been linked to various types of cancer, including “leukemia, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, brain, bone, breast, ovarian, prostate, testicular and liver cancers,” supported by research from the American National Cancer Institute. Exposure to pesticides can also affect the endocrine system, which then can disrupt metabolism, growth and development, brain function, tissue function, sexual function, reproduction, sleep, and mood, and more.<sup>8</sup>

In Israel, the 1970 “Safety at Work Regulations (occupational hygiene and health of those who work with pesticides)” (revised in 2016) is meant to provide protection for agricultural workers using pesticides in order to prevent these detrimental health problems. In addition, the 1997 “Labor Safety Regulations (Personal Protective Equipment)” clearly lays out the specific equipment employers must provide workers to ensure their health and safety. These domestic regulations are supported by international standards, such as the International Labor Organization’s 40 plus adopted standards relating to occupational safety and health; “nearly half of ILO instruments deal directly or indirectly with occupational safety and health issues.”<sup>9</sup> In 2003, “Convention 184 - Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention - Convention concerning Safety and Health in Agriculture” entered into force, acknowledging the unique risks agricultural workers face in this field of work.<sup>10</sup>

The results of this survey only reinforce Ministry of Economy data from 2015 that show clear differences between the safety conditions of migrant workers and Israeli workers in the agricultural sector. In March 2017, the draft of the state comptroller's report reveals a clear call to the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs to examine and address the lack of adequate supervision in pesticide use by migrant agricultural workers. The report also states, “even when the inspectors found a safety offense...no sanctions were imposed against the employer, and the authorities' ability to deter employers is limited, as is their ability to protect workers exposed to pesticides.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite these various forms of domestic and international standards, migrant agricultural workers in Israel often find themselves risking their health and safety in order to fulfill their employers’ expectations, and hence keep their jobs. The next section will present the results of the survey, along with relevant sections of regulations that are meant to prevent these forms of negligence from taking place.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.farmworkerjustice.org/content/pesticide-safety>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.toxicsaction.org/problems-and-solutions/pesticides>

<sup>9</sup> <http://ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C184](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C184)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.3919877>

Research made by George Meera and Mary Jianan in 2015-2016<sup>12</sup> included interviews with three workers who were not provided with protective gear and "were suffering from headache, burning sensation of eyes, dermatitis, itching, giddiness. They also explained their poor housing conditions, non-availability of training for using pesticides and regular health checkups, and inaccessibility of proper health care settings. They were ignorant regarding types of pesticides they are using and the side effects."

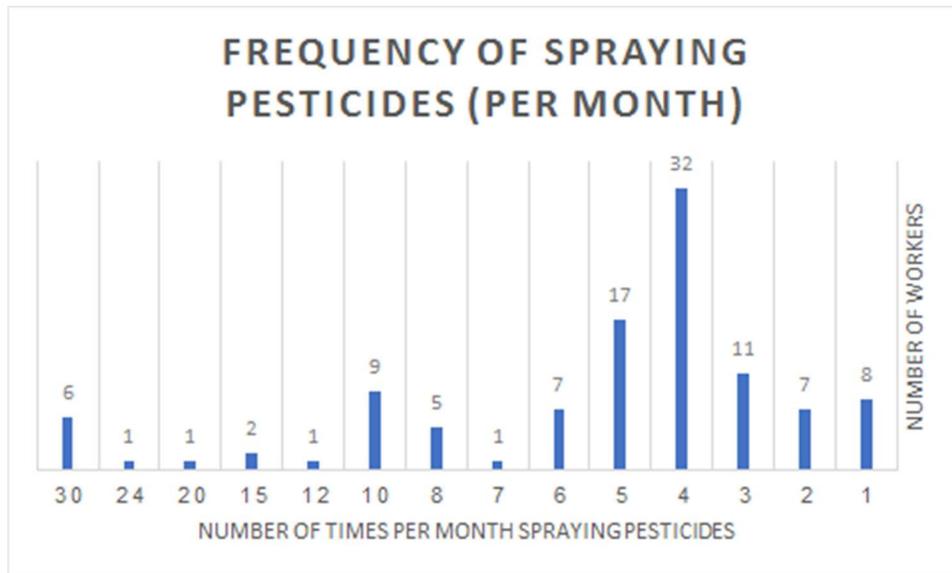
A summary of the different pesticides used in Israel, with related side effects, was also compiled. The full table (seen in the Annex) includes 14 common pesticides in Israel, which include side effects from eye and skin irritation (resulting from use of Acephate and Fipronil) to severe poisoning which attacks the central nervous system (Dimethoate). Below summarizes just five of the pesticides used in Israel:

Trade Name	Common Name	Approved uses	Side effects
ACE 750 SP	Acephate	For the control of aphids, thrips and caterpillars on flowers.	Irritation of eyes and skin.
Adonis 12.5% UL*	fipronil 12.5% ULV	For the control of locusts.	Direct, short-term contact with skin can result in slight skin irritation. When individuals have eaten Fipronil, reported health effects included sweating, nausea, vomiting, headache, stomach pain, dizziness, weakness, and seizures.
Agro-Lambacin Super 315 EC	Profenfos 30% + Lambda-Cyhalothrin 1.5%	For the control of African Bollworm ( <i>Helicoverpa armigera</i> ) cotton.	Inhalation may cause burning sensations, convulsions, coughing, labored breathing, shortness of breath, and sore throat. Contact with the skin and eyes may cause redness and pain. Ingestion can cause abdominal pain and coughing.
Akito 2.5% EC	Beta cypermethrin	For the control of stalk borer on Maize	Nausea, headache, muscle weakness, salivation, shortness of breath and seizures. Localized reactors confined to the upper respiratory tract include rhinitis, sneezing, scratchy throat, oral mucosal edema, and even laryngeal mucosal edema. Localized reactions of the lower respiratory tract include cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest pain. <sup>3</sup>
Alphahock 7.5% ULV	Alphacypermethrin 7.5% ULV	For the control of sweet potato butterfly on sweet potato	
Celphos	Aluminium phosphide 56% table	For the control of maize weevil ( <i>sitophilus</i> spp) and flour beetle ( <i>Tribolium</i> spp) on stored maize.	The dominant clinical feature is severe <u>hypotension</u> refractory to <u>dopamine</u> therapy Other features may include dizziness, fatigue, tightness in the chest, headache, <u>nausea</u> , vomiting, <u>diarrhoea</u> , <u>ataxia</u> , numbness, <u>paraesthesia</u> , tremor, muscle weakness, <u>diplopia</u> and <u>jaundice</u> . If severe inhalation occurs, the patient may develop <u>acute respiratory distress syndrome</u> (ARDS), <u>heart failure</u> , <u>arrhythmias</u> , <u>convulsion</u> and <u>coma</u> .

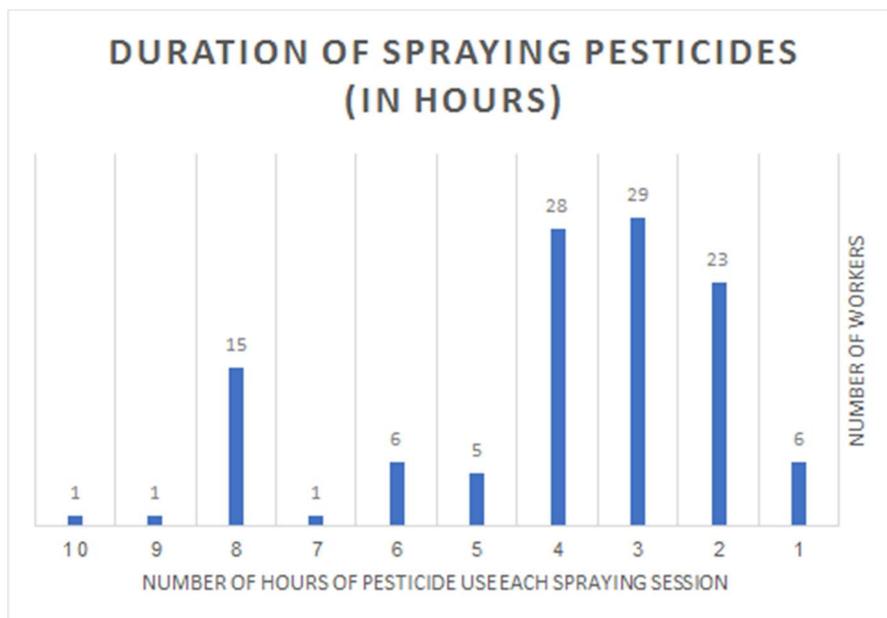
<sup>12</sup> Research was conducted as part of the Global Health program at Ben Gurion University.

## Patterns of Pesticide Use

Pesticide use by migrant workers varies significantly, both in regards to frequency per month and number of hours per spraying session. Spraying pesticides approximately once a week (four times a month) was the most common response received from workers, accounting for almost 30% of the responses. The other responses ranged from once a month to 30 days a month; six workers responded that they spray pesticides every day as their job in the agricultural sector.



The average number of hours in a spraying session is 3.98 hours. However, a surprising 13% of respondents (15 workers) said they spray for eight hours at a time when they use pesticides. This finding should be treated with caution, as only two workers reported spraying seven or nine hours; but if it is valid, it represents a real red light, as an eight-hour session would pose serious hazards.



Past Kav LaOved research has found that many workers report side effects such as eye problems, headaches, dizziness, difficulty breathing, and various skin issues as a result of the contact with these chemical substances. Out of all of the survey respondents, **over half (51.7%) said they feel unhealthy after using pesticides**. The most obvious ways to avoid workers risking their health are to ensure proper training and protective equipment, which are clearly identified in the relevant regulations.

*During the peak flower production season, a group of Thai workers were spraying pesticides five to six hours a day, five days a week. One of the workers said that after working with the pesticides for so long, he would feel weak and dizzy, and sometimes even experience vomiting. Despite this, he never saw a doctor or informed the employer of his condition.*

Section 10 and 11 of the Safety at Work Regulations<sup>13</sup> mandates preliminary medical checks to ensure that workers are suitable to work with pesticides. Out of the 121 respondents, five replied they had been to a medical check-up due to their work with pesticides. This means **95.87% of the workers who use pesticides have never been to any kind of medical check-up**. This is directly backed by the State Comptroller's Report in 2017, which states that only 6% of workers received a medical exam by a doctor in the last year. While the regulations require check-ups every two years, four out of the five workers in the Kav LaOved survey who had been had only gone once a year. **Out of all of the 121 respondents who use pesticides, only one received medical attention according to the governmental regulations.**

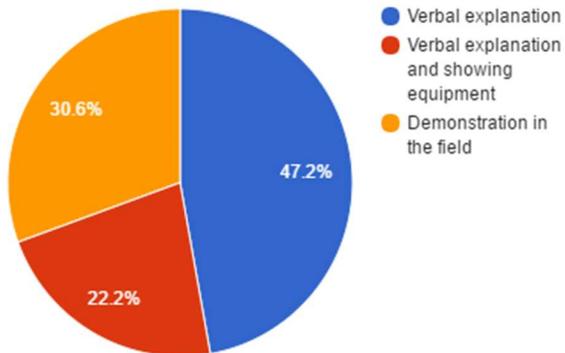


*This worker has been suffering from different rashes on his hands since spraying pesticides.*

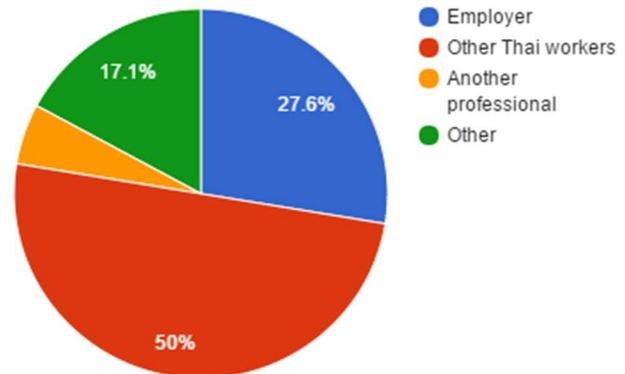
In regards to training, agricultural workers using pesticides are supposed to be trained in an institution and program that has been approved by a labor inspector, to ensure adequate knowledge and expertise in this subject, according to Section 2 of the Safety at Work Regulations. **The survey found that 80.3% of workers using pesticides have never received training or instructions before using them.** In addition, only 22.2% of workers who did receive instruction actually saw a demonstration in the field; otherwise, training was only verbal or verbal while showing equipment as well. The State Comptroller's Report in 2017 found that only 39% from those who actually received training were trained in their own language.

<sup>13</sup> <http://economy.gov.il/Employment/SafetyAndHealth/Mafar/MafarInstructions/safetyRegulations.pdf>

If you did receive training or instructions before using pesticides, what kind was it?



If you received training or instructions, who gave it to you?



A common story is that new workers are trained by more veteran workers, and hence the training can be casual and lacking information. **Half of respondents said they were trained by another Thai worker, whereas 27.6% received training from their employer.** Again, regulations clearly state that an approved institution or program must provide the training to ensure compliance with standards and protection of workers' health and safety. Due to changes in knowledge and practice, it may be necessary to provide training more than once. 77.4% of respondents said they only received training once; 12.9% received it twice, and 9.7% said they received training three or more times.

A recent article (March 2017) in the *Disease Control Journal* titled "Working conditions and Occupational safety along Thai agricultural workers in The State of Israel" from Chiang Mai University and the Bureau of Health in Bangkok interviewed 246 workers who had been in Israel for over one year. The research shows that 59% of workers using pesticides did not have knowledge about its hazard, while 64.6% could not read the labels of the pesticide containers.

Protective equipment is required by both the Safety at Work Regulations Section 4 and the Labor Safety Regulations (Personal Protective Equipment) of 1997. **Only 46.9% of respondents said they received protective equipment to use during spraying pesticides (the State Comptroller's 2017 statistics places this figure at 57%).** The Labor Safety Regulations call for protection of face and eyes, respiratory tract, hands and legs in the form of protective goggles, masks with air purification filters (35.9% of respondents received this), and non-penetrable gloves and shoes/boots (43.8% of respondents received this). Data from the Ministry of Economy confirmed this concern, that a minority of migrant workers receive protective equipment from employers, compared to a decisive majority among Israeli workers.<sup>14</sup>

*A group of Thai workers employed in a vineyard came to Kav LaOved to complain about intensive work with pesticides without proper training and protection. They often felt unwell after spraying pesticides, and they all told the employer about it. Sometimes the employer would invite a doctor to come to check them, but in other cases he would bring them pills without any labels or explanations. This was concerning, especially as the employer did not seem to take allergies to medications into consideration.*

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.3919877>



*Worker holding the only protective equipment he received for spraying pesticides:  
a disposable, plastic rain poncho*

In general, when asked if the equipment was in good condition, 46.9% of workers said no, that the equipment was old, worn, and inadequate. When asked if the equipment was ever washed or changed, only 49% responded yes.

There is an extremely concerning dichotomy between the type of gear and training Israelis receive, versus that of migrant workers. This has been recognized by the Israeli government as well. In one field visit, the Thai workers explained that the Israeli workers get to spray pesticides with one tractor that includes a glass encasement that protects the driver, whereas Thai workers must use the spraying tractor that is open with no glass protection:



Similarly, one worker quoted, "When operating with hazardous chemicals like pesticides, workers have to carry the heavy barrel while the employer drives a car to spray it. The only protective equipment we get is a knitted helmet." There is no reason for this distinction and discriminatory behavior that puts Thai workers in physical risk.

Point 3 of Section 3 of the Safety at Work Regulations states that employers must:

Install and maintain clean showers equipped with hot water, soap and towels that are clean enough for each of the workers...At the end of a working day with pesticides, the worker takes a shower with soap and water and changes into clean clothes...

Point 10 of Section 3 of the Safety at Work Regulations requires that the employer “will arrange for laundry and daily cleaning of work clothes.” **40.2% of workers said they did not have a proper washing machine at their workplace to clean their clothes after using pesticides.**

While the majority of respondents said they have a proper shower with hot water and soap to clean themselves after pesticides (70.9%), only about **half of them (49.6%) said employers allow them to shower right away after using pesticides.** For the other half, employers only allow that they shower at the end of the working day, which averages 10-13 hours a day. This means that these workers have to potentially spend hours with pesticide residue on them, even though there may be functional showers available.



*Inadequate showers*

Workers are also entitled to specific clothes for pesticide use, as well as separate storage for clean and dirty clothes. Section 3 (Environmental and Personal Hygiene) Points 3 and 9 in the Safety at Work Regulations state:

*Install multiple and separate wardrobes for each worker, one for storage of work clothes and one for clean clothes....At the end of a working day with pesticides, the worker removed the work clothes and left them in the designated wardrobes...*

It is rare to see wardrobes for these workers, let alone separate wardrobes for clean and dirty clothes. Most often, workers fashion hanging racks for themselves out of the materials available around them.



*Makeshift clothing storage outside*

In one case, in a moshav in the Arava Region, Kav LaOved met three Cambodian agricultural “students” who live and work side-by-side with a group of Thai agricultural workers. The three students live in an old bus, which has all of its windows blocked and no working ventilation/cooling system. The students informed us that they spray pesticides as part of their job, but with no protective equipment at all and having only received instruction from the other workers. When Kav LaOved asked if these students were willing to file a complaint about this, they decided not to because their priority was to file a complaint about their living situation. Even after explaining to the students that they could complain about both issues, they perceived their housing problem as being more immediate and of higher concern to them.



*The photo on the left is the caravan described in the previous case study. As can be seen in the photo on the right, workers have made a wardrobe by simply hanging clothing on a string nailed to the walls.*

*Sonchan worked with pesticides three to four times a week, for many hours a day, without any proper protective measures. Since he often had headaches after working with pesticides, he went*

*to his employer, who only gave him over the counter pills for reducing headaches. Sonchan was not referred to or taken to receive proper medical attention.*

Storage of pesticides is laid out in clear detail in Section 6 of the Safety at Work Regulations. Despite this, a third of respondents said that pesticides were not stored in a locked cabinet for this purpose only. Not only are these chemicals supposed to be stored in specific ways, but also disposed of accordingly. Section 3 Point 2 of the Safety at Work Regulations requires that employers “shall collect and dispose pesticide residues, including its packaging.” However, in one moshav in the Arava Region, a bin of empty pesticide spraying equipment was found just meters away from where workers rest, cook, eat and sleep (see below):

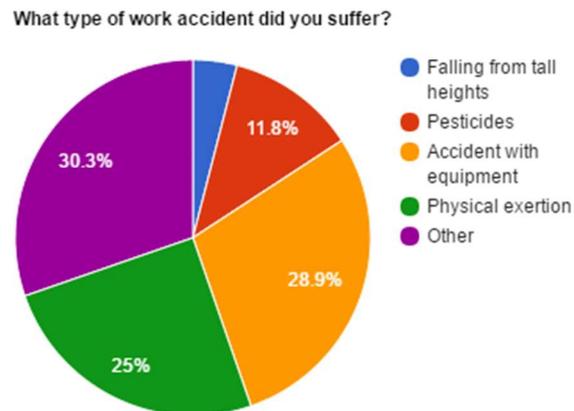


In summary, protective equipment is critical for ensuring workers' health and safety when using pesticides. It is clear that employers are not doing their part to provide the proper equipment, as is required of them by Israeli regulations. **84.7% of survey respondents said they do not feel safe working with pesticides given the protection equipment that was provided to them.**

*Workers from a flower farm were using pesticides three times a week, at least four hours each time. They did not have any protective equipment provided by the employer, so would tie shirts around their faces as makeshift masks. Some workers would get a rash or other skin irritation about spraying. While the employer would provide ointment, he still did not give them any protection equipment or clothing. The workers stated feeling unsafe and unprotected when told to do this job.*

## Patterns of Work Accidents in the Agricultural Sector

In addition to spraying pesticides, agricultural workers are employed in intense physical labor for extensive hours, at times exposed to extreme heat or cold. According to the Chiang Mai and Bureau of Health research, 92.7% of workers had worked in "stifling heat environment" and 40.7% had worked with poor ventilation. The majority of the Thai workers surveyed had experienced some injury such as muscle pain from unnatural postures (i.e. a picking posture, in which the back and neck are strained for hours at a time) either frequently (33.7%) or less frequently (31.7%). Workers also operate equipment that can be extremely dangerous if they are lacking proper training or equipment (i.e. tractors), and are also at risk for being injured by animals (i.e. kicked by a large animal, such as a cow or horse).



**Resulting from this survey, 48.5% reported getting injured while working.** The majority of respondents (70%) said they told their employer about their injury. Only 28.8% of the respondents said they received time off after succumbing an injury from work. Out of the people who received time off, **87.7% responded that they did not get paid for the time they took off** to recover from their injury.

Working from tall heights, such as fixing roofs of buildings or building/repairing greenhouses, is beyond the parameters of the agricultural sector visa, and employers who employ agricultural workers to do so are supposed to face severe consequences. Welding is another activity that sometimes employers request from workers. Nevertheless, this are activities that workers sometimes find themselves doing, and dangerous work due to limited to no training or equipment.

In one case, a worker fell off a roof that was about eight meters tall. He was luckily not injured, but the employer was present and did not make any efforts to check the worker's condition or take him to the hospital. The worker quotes, "what made me feel insignificant was that my employer...was not bothered about me, instead he went to look at the roof which had broken." Later, the employer took the worker's passport, saying he would fill a form for health insurance. At the time, the worker had yet to see any form.

*The worker fell while repairing the greenhouse from very high up. The employer took him to the hospital after some delay, and demanded that he tell the hospital that he had fallen off a bike. The worker was pressured to sign on various documents that were only in Hebrew and he was given no explanation. The worker is not recovering and is expected to have a very long rehabilitation period.*

Employers not taking workers to the hospital following an injury, or only providing limited medical care – such as over the counter painkillers – is another problem. On whether they received treatment from a health professional, **59% said they did not receive any medical care**, even though employers are required to provide medical insurance for workers, as well as make deposits to the National Insurance Institute, to ensure workers receive work injury compensation if necessary.

Some workers have commented on how employers respond to workers' complaints to Kav LaOved, in fear of complaints being filed to the ministries or further enforcement action. However, the impact is not sustained and long-term, and workers claim they are still left without proper attention and medical care:

"[After complaining to Kav LaOved] some of the employers have become scared we will complain and the authorities will come. So they began to behave better. They began to tell us that if any of us workers were really sick, really in need of a doctor, then we should tell them. But when we did tell them we needed a doctor, they weren't interested in taking us."

"Many of the workers are injured because of the crazy work demands of the employers. Since there was a case of someone daring to demand their rights, the employers improved. But this improvement only materialised in their words, because their actions remained the same. It's like, they want loads of work done but only wish to use a small workforce. This makes the work really hard and dangerous, yet they won't allow anyone else to help with the work."

These outcomes are in clear contrast with the official reported work accidents in this sector. 300 cases were reported to the Safety Administration in the last year; in 2014-2015, the National Insurance Institute recognized some 1,300 agricultural work accidents for the purpose of paying injury allowance.<sup>15</sup> If we assume the survey results can be applied to the general population, roughly 10,000 migrant agricultural workers in Israel have suffered a work accident: significantly more than either the Safety Administration or National Insurance Institute are recognizing and addressing.

*Just a month after arriving in Israel, seasonal Sri Lankan agricultural worker J slipped on an orange which was on the floor, while he was working in an orange packing factory. Four days after falling, he was referred to a doctor for medical treatment and received five days medical leave. J did not receive wages for these five days of leave. Still suffering from the injury, he underwent further treatment but returned to work 16 days after the accident. After another month, he felt severe back pain and numbness in his leg, and returned to the doctor who identified muscle damage from the fall. He currently still feels back pain and pain and numbness in his leg. His short-term contract in Israel is for six months only, which required him to take out loans of 220,000 RS back in Sri Lanka (around 5,500 NIS). J now wants to go back to Sri Lanka, even though he has not earned enough to repay his loans. Kav LaOved is assisting J in receiving work accident compensation from the National Insurance Institute.*

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.3919046>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This report, along with the 2017 State Comptroller's Report, clearly identifies the main and most disturbing failures related to protecting migrant workers' occupational health and safety in the agricultural sector. All related stakeholders – be they workers, employers, the government, and civil society organizations – have a vested interest in protecting workers' health and well-being. In order to do so, the following steps must be taken:

1. **Governmental Enforcement** - The relevant governmental authorities responsible for the well-being of Thai workers in Israel - the Ministry of Economy and the Population and Immigration Authority - must take greater steps to monitor the situation of migrant agricultural workers' health and safety, and check for employer compliance. These bodies must make more inspections to the communities where these workers are employed. Only 4.2% of survey respondents said an inspector came to their worksite.
  - a. Thai translation must be made available during inspections and other governmental actions to enforce these regulations. Out of workers who said an inspector was present at their worksite, only 3.1% included a Thai translator who was able to directly communicate with the workers.
  - b. Inspections should be random and not coordinated with the employer. In past experiences, coordination has resulted in employers pressuring or even threatening workers in order to maintain an image that regulations are being followed.
2. **Consequences for Non-compliance** - Employers who violate these regulations and do not uphold standards necessary for protecting workers' health and safety must face consequences, such as fines or even losing their permit to employ migrant workers. Employers must receive a clear message that violation of this standards is unacceptable. In 2016, only a few dozen safety orders (which requires cessation of the work until the defect is corrected) were issued by the Occupational Safety Administration for non-compliance in the agricultural sector.<sup>16</sup>
3. **Research and Reporting** – This report shows a severe lack of knowledge, research, reporting, and documentation of migrant agricultural workers' health and safety while employed in Israel. Especially given the nature of employment, it is critical to better monitor and report on these severe violations. This includes tracking the long-term health effects of pesticides on workers' health, once they return to their countries of origin.
4. **Medical checks** - Given the immense impact on workers' health, agricultural workers using pesticides must receive medical checks before and during pesticide use to ensure their health and safety. While these standards are present in Israeli regulations, they must be enforced in practice. Again, employers who do not comply must face real forms of reprimand.
5. **Corporate Social Responsibility** – Companies that source products from farms which violate workers' rights can demand accountability by utilizing corporate social responsibility to reiterate the importance of workers' health and safety in the production process.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.3919046>

## Annex

### Survey about Pesticides and Work Accidents

This is a survey for agricultural workers in Israel about use of pesticides and work accidents. We are doing this survey to gain information and work towards better protection and enforcement of the law for agricultural workers. Thank you for filling the survey.

#### Pesticides

1. How many times per month are you using pesticides? \_\_\_\_
2. How many hours each time are you using pesticides? \_\_\_\_
3. Do you ever feel unhealthy after using pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
4. Did you ever receive training or instructions before using pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
5. If yes, what was the training or instructions?
  - Explanation by talking
  - Explanation by talking and showing equipment
  - Demonstration in the field
6. If yes, who gave you the training and instructions?
  - Employer
  - Other Thai workers
  - Another professional
  - Other
7. How many times did you receive training or instructions?
  - Once
  - Twice
  - Three or more times
8. Did you feel safe working with pesticides with the training or instructions you got?
  - Yes
  - No
9. Did you receive protective equipment?
  - Yes
  - No
10. If yes, was it:
  - Work clothes for pesticide use only
  - Gloves and boots (non-penetrable)
  - Mask with a filter
  - Emergency showers with eye-wash facilities
11. Was the equipment in good condition?
  - Yes
  - No
12. Was the equipment ever washed or changed?
  - Yes
  - No

13. Did you feel safe working with pesticides with the protective equipment you got?
  - Yes
  - No
14. Are pesticides stored in a locked cabinet for this purpose only?
  - Yes
  - No
15. Do you have a proper washing machine to clean your clothes after using pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
16. Do you have a proper shower with hot water and soap to clean yourself after using pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
17. If the employer allows you to shower after pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
18. Did you ever go to medical checkups due to working with pesticides?
  - Yes
  - No
19. If yes, how often?
  - Once a year
  - Once every two years
  - Once every three years

### **Work accident**

20. Were you ever hurt while working?
  - Yes
  - No
21. How did you get hurt?
  - Falling from tall heights
  - Pesticides use
  - Accident with equipment
  - Physical exertion (i.e. lifting heavy weights)
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
22. Did you tell your employer?
  - Yes
  - No
23. Did you get medical treatment by a health professional (doctor, hospital)?
  - Yes
  - No
24. Did you get time off?
  - Yes
  - No
25. Did you get paid for time off?
  - Yes
  - No

### **Enforcement**

26. Did an inspector (who is NOT your employer) ever come to your work site?
- Yes
  - No
27. Did they come with a Thai translator?
- Yes
  - No

Thank you!

28. Can Kav LaOved contact you to ask more questions about your experience?
- Yes
  - No
29. If yes, what is your phone number? \_\_\_\_\_

## Labor Safety Regulations (Personal Protective Equipment) - 1997

### *Sections relevant to use of pesticides*

<b>Body part to be protected</b>		<b>Hazardous work and processes</b>	<b>Type of protective equipment</b>
Head	1.9	Pruning and cutting trees where there is a danger of injury from a falling mass;	Protective helmet
Face and eyes	4.13	The use of pesticides whose permanent status on their packaging according to the Plant Protection Regulations (Import and Sale of Chemical Preparations), 5755-1994 establishes a requirement for eye protection;	Protective goggles against chemical hazards; Face masks
Respiratory tract	5.6	Work on spraying harmful or toxic substances;	Masks with air purification filter; A personal breathing system with air supply from a fixed container or other external source; Personal respiratory systems with air supply from a movable container;
	5.7	Application of pesticides or in fertilization, as stated in the Work Safety Regulations (Workers in Pesticides), 5724-1964 and the Safety Regulations at Work (Occupational Hygiene and Health of Workers in Organic and Carbonate Phosphates).	
	5.8	The use of pesticides whose permanent status on their packaging under the Plant Protection Regulations (Arrangement, Importation and Sale of Chemical Preparations), 5755-1994, establishes a requirement for the protection of respiration;	
Hands	6.3	Cutting trees, pruning and cutting branches with mechanical tools;	Gloves for protection from chemical, physical or biological hazards
Legs	7.23	Work requiring hazardous liquid chemical agents;	Shoes or safety boots with special anti-skid soles;

## Common Pesticides used in Agricultural Sector in Israel and their side effects

	Trade Name	Common Name	Approved uses	Side effects
1	ACE 750 SP	Acephate	For the control of aphids, thrips and caterpillars on flowers.	Irritation of eyes and skin.
2	Actara 25 WG	Thiamethoxam 250g/kg	For the control of aphids, white fly & caterpillar on flowers.	harmful if swallowed
3	Actellic 2% dust*	Pirimiphos-methyl	For the control of storage pests on cereals and pulses.	At high doses, pirimiphos-methyl and other organophosphorus insecticides share a mechanism of toxicity: inhibition of the activity of acetylcholinesterase enzymes in the nervous system, resulting in excess acetylcholine at nerve terminals, and producing acute symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, cholinergic effects, weakness and paralysis.
4	Actellic 50 EC*	Pirimiphos – methyl	For the control of aphids in cotton.	
5	Actellic 50 EC	Primiphos methyl 50% EC	For the control of mosquitoes (Anopheles arabiensis).	
6	Adonis 12.5 UL*	fipronil 12.5% ULV	For the control of locusts.	Direct, short-term contact with skin can result in slight skin irritation. When individuals have eaten fipronil, reported health effects included sweating, nausea, vomiting, headache, stomach pain, dizziness, weakness, and seizures.
7	Agro-Lambacin Super 315 EC	Profenfos 30% + Lambda-Cyhalothrin 1.5%	For the control of African Bollworm ( <i>Helicoverpa armigera</i> ) cotton.	Inhalation may cause burning sensations, convulsions, coughing, labored breathing, shortness of breath, and sore throat. Contact with the skin and eyes may cause redness and pain. Ingestion can cause abdominal pain and coughing.
8	Agro-Thoate 40% EC	Dimethoate 40% EC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the control of beanfly (<i>Ophiomyia phaseoli</i>); Bean aphid (<i>Aphis fabae</i>); Thrips (<i>Taenothrips spp.</i>) ABW (<i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>) on french beans.</li> <li>For the control of aphids (<i>Myzus persicae</i>) and</li> </ol>	<p>When inhaled, the first effects are usually respiratory and may include bloody or runny nose, coughing, chest discomfort, difficult or short breath, and wheezing due to constriction or excess fluid in the bronchial tubes.</p> <p>Skin contact with organophosphates may cause localized sweating and involuntary muscle contractions.</p> <p>Eye contact will cause pain, bleeding, tears, pupil constriction, and blurred vision. Following exposure by any route, other Pallor, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache, dizziness, eye pain, blurred vision, constriction or</p>

			<p>ABW (<i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>) on tomato.</p> <p>3. For the control of cabbage Aphid and various aphids on cabbage and potato, respectively.</p>	<p>dilation of the eye pupils, tears, salivation, sweating, and confusion.</p> <p>Severe poisoning will affect the central nervous system, producing incoordination, slurred speech, loss of reflexes, weakness, fatigue, involuntary muscle contractions, twitching, tremors of the tongue or eyelids, and eventually paralysis of the body extremities and the respiratory muscles. In severe cases there may also be involuntary defecation or urination, psychosis, irregular heartbeats, unconsciousness, convulsions and coma. Death may be caused by respiratory failure or cardiac arrest.<sup>2</sup></p>
9	Akito 2.5% EC	Beta cypermethrin	For the control of stalk borer on Maize	Nausea, headache, muscle weakness, salivation, shortness of breath and seizures. Localized reactors confined to the upper respiratory tract include rhinitis, sneezing, scratchy throat, oral mucosal edema, and even laryngeal mucosal edema. Localized reactions of the lower respiratory tract include cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest pain. <sup>3</sup>
10	Alphahock 7.5% ULV	Alphacypermethrin 7.5% ULV	For the control of sweet potato butterfly on sweet potato	
11	Alphos 56% Tab.	Aluminium Phosphide 560 gm/kg	Insecticide (Fumigant) for the control of maize weevil on maize.	Carcinogenic effects in higher quantity
12	Apron Star 42 WS	thiamethoxam 20% + metalaxyl - 20% + difenoconazole 2%	For the control of Russian wheat aphid on barley (To be used as seed treatment pesticide)	Harmful if swallowed
13	Basudin 600 EW****	Diazinon	For the control of armyworm and other pests on cereals.	The initial symptoms of humans are nausea, dizziness, salivation, headache, sweating, lacrimation, and rhinorrhea. The symptoms can progress to vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, muscle twitching, weakness, tremor, a lack of coordination and miosis.
14	Celphos	Aluminium phosphide 56% table	for the control of maize weevil ( <i>sitophilus</i> spp) and flour beetle ( <i>Tribolium</i> spp) on stored maize.	The dominant clinical feature is severe <u>hypotension</u> refractory to <u>dopamine</u> therapy Other features may include dizziness, fatigue, tightness in the chest, headache, <u>nausea</u> , vomiting, <u>diarrhoea</u> , <u>ataxia</u> , numbness, <u>paraesthesia</u> , tremor, muscle weakness, <u>diplopia</u> and <u>jaundice</u> . If severe inhalation occurs, the patient may develop <u>acute respiratory distress syndrome</u> (ARDS), <u>heart failure</u> , <u>arrhythmias</u> , <u>convulsion</u> and <u>coma</u> .

קו לעובד  
Worker's Hotline  
عنوان العامل

May 2017