Agricultural Safety and Health in Argentina

by Brandi Janssen, PhD

Although I-CASH’s mission is to focus on Iowa farming, our model of collaborative programming could be implemented anywhere. This May, I-CASH director Brandi Janssen, along with advisory board member Diane Rohlman and I-CASH affiliated faculty Matt Nonnenmann, spent a week in Rosario, Argentina talking with farmers, grain co-op members, and extension agents. The trip was precipitated by an earlier visit from Dr. Marcos Grigioni, a surgeon, farmer and Agricultural Federation of Argentina (AFA) member who reached out to University of Iowa (UI) faculty about farm safety and health resources for Argentina. In 2015, Dr. Diane Rohlman, director of the Iowa Agricultural Medicine Course, secured funding for Dr. Grigioni to take the course and spend a week in Iowa learning about UI’s farm safety and health outreach. The trip to Argentina was funded by a UI College of Public Health Global Health Grant, as the college looks to expand international research and outreach partnerships.

Rosario, with a population of around 1,000,000 people, is in Santa Fe Province, northwest of Buenos Aires. Located in the incredibly productive Pampas region, this area grows most of Argentina’s soybeans and is home to many large agribusinesses.

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The Iowa Department of Public Health is once again hosting the Health and Safety Tent (HST) at the 2016 Farm Progress Show August 30-September 1 in Boone, IA. The HST has moved to Lot #1358 on the east edge of the exhibitor grounds. While participant plans are still being finalized, the Ag Centers from MN (UMASH), IA (GPCAH), and NE (CS-CASH) have all committed to the project. Purdue University is bringing their AgriAbility display and the Life Essentials pickup equipped with a lift to demonstrate options for keeping injured farmers working. Iowa Operation Lifesaver, the Hy-Vee Healthy You Mobile, the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS), the AgriSafe Network, and the Iowa DOT Zero Fatalities project are just some of the other groups partnering to offer farmers ideas and information.

New this year will be a Farmer’s Coffee Corner where attendees can enjoy free refreshments and talk to health and safety professionals about the needs of farm families. Check for HST updates at idph.iowa.gov/lpp/occupational-health or contact Kathy at 515/281-4930.

Graduate Student Projects

Student Research Week and the first annual Occupational and Environmental Health Research Day at the University of Iowa College of Public Health, provided venues for two graduate students to present their findings from pilot studies.

Beginning Farmer’s Health - Maya Ramaswamy

The majority of farmers in the US are established farmers, people who are on average about 58 years old and have farmed for over 30 years. As these farmers age and retire, it is important to understand who will take their place. Beginning farmers, those who have 10 years or less experience operating a farm, face unique challenges in starting and sustaining their businesses. I am currently conducting an online survey to understand the health, activities, and demographics of beginning farmers around the country. Since I began the study, I have observed that beginning farmers in Iowa are younger than established farmers, although ages widely range from 19-70, they are more likely to be women, and the majority experience musculoskeletal pain.

Health Concerns Among Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Iowa - Ashlee Johannes

For this project, I surveyed migrant and seasonal farmworkers throughout Iowa about their injuries and illnesses, healthcare-seeking behavior, and use of prevention measures. This population, which is largely of Hispanic decent, is at an increased risk for several occupational and nonoccupational health problems due to multiple barriers and genetics. My study findings indicate more than 60% of the population did not receive information on any prevalent health problem from their doctor, employer, or other sources. However, more than 60% of the population sought healthcare for diabetes, high blood pressure, muscle and joint pain, or eye injury. I plan to disseminate the results of this study to employers of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and health providers to address the gaps in providing preventive education and care to the transient, migrant and seasonal farmworker population.

Both studies were funded by GPCAH Pilot Grants. For more information visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/pilot-grant-program

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to an expanding broiler and egg industry. The region also has many greenhouse and horticulture operations. Blueberries, peaches, oranges and sweet potatoes are particularly important products, grown for both export and domestic consumption.

Like many regions of the world, agricultural production has consolidated; farms are becoming larger and production is more specialized. As in the US, Argentine farmers use very large equipment and house livestock in confinement. As a result, they see many of the same health and safety concerns as US farmers, including entanglements with equipment, grain bin incidents, and injuries to youth.

One goal of the trip was for the researchers to better understand how the AFA, a large farmer cooperative, could develop agricultural safety and health programming. Cooperatives are required by law to provide educational outreach to their members and AFA employs an Educational Director, Florencia Doná, to oversee their efforts. As part of her work, she has regular meetings with a women’s group of about 100 members. This energetic group provides an important link between the co-op and its member families. During the visit, the women’s group evaluated materials developed in the US and translated into Spanish to begin to assess their value in a cross-cultural setting.

Another goal of the visit was to identify potential local partners for health and safety programming. While visiting the US, Dr. Grigioni was especially interested in the collaborative structure of I-CASH and hopes to create a similar model in Argentina. During meetings with extension agents, researchers, and agricultural educators, the UI faculty asked each about their perspectives on agricultural safety and health in Argentina, especially the barriers to health and safety education and programming.

Argentine farms are family operations, with immediate and extended family members providing most of the labor. As in the US, farmers are proud of their agricultural production, but concerned about the long-term stability of their farms and rural communities. This introductory trip will hopefully set the stage for more meaningful collaborations that will lead to improved health and safety of Argentine farmers.

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Department of Public Health, the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center, and the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, among others.

Our summer plans also include some research activities with University of Iowa student DeAnn Scott-Harp and recent graduate Ashlee Johannes. They will be helping with projects related to volunteer safety in horticulture operations and health and safety programming for agricultural lenders. Here’s to a safe and productive season!

Dr. Brandi Janssen directs I-CASH, housed in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health of the College of Public Health. She can be reached at 319-335-4190 (brandi-janssen@uiowa.edu).
2016 MRASH Conference: Safeguarding Farm Livelihoods
by Gayle Olson, I-CASH Assistant to the Director

The Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference (MRASH) will be held on November 15-16 at the Terrace View Event Center in Sioux Center, IA. This conference brings together many different perspectives on agricultural safety and health; farmers, researchers, healthcare providers, educators, ag organizations and agribusiness are among the conference attendees and their healthy exchange of ideas helps to make solutions more effective. For the second year in a row a rural Iowa community will host the conference, allowing more participation from local farm families, agribusinesses, and health care providers, as well as supporting local food efforts and rural businesses.

Safeguarding Farm Livelihoods is the theme of the fifteenth annual conference. The first day will feature an in-depth look at the importance of design and planning as tools to prevent safety and health problems in agriculture. Breakout sessions will feature emerging research and evaluation of outreach projects from around the Midwest. In the evening, a poster reception will include displays from local projects as well as additional research and outreach efforts. Participation from farm families will be one of the key ingredients on the second day through panel presentations and small group discussions.

A new feature this year will be an Agricultural Health Fair scheduled for November 16th. Stations will address a variety of health and safety concerns on the farm with information, demonstrations and health screenings. Short presentations will also cycle during the afternoon.

We welcome your participation at the conference! Poster abstracts are still being accepted and sponsorships are available for either the conference or the health fair. For more information visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/2016-mrash or contact Gayle Olson, Conference Coordinator at gayle-olson@uiowa.edu.