



Newsletter about Pesticides

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Jurisdictional News



USA: Class action of agricultural workers for lack of adequate protection

On June 1, 2022, a group of migrant workers working for Mastronardi Produce-USA at a greenhouse in Coldwater, Michigan, filed a [class action](#) against the company for exposing them to hazardous disinfectant pesticides without providing them with proper protective equipment, resulting in the onset of serious medical problems for the employees.

Mastronardi Produce-USA is a leading producer of greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables, whose products are sold nationwide under the Sunset brand.

For the 2020-2021 tomato production season, Mastronardi and its subsidiary Maroa Farms Inc. implemented a disinfection program that included spraying disinfectant on the greenhouse floor and using irritating pesticides.

On June 1, 2022, a group of migrant workers employed by the company filed a class action against Mastronardi Produce-USA in the U.S. District Court for the Western District, Southern Division of Michigan.

The class action alleges that workers have been routinely exposed to Virkon S, a broad-spectrum disinfectant and virucide registered as a pesticide with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), without being provided with adequate protective equipment.

Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the EPA provides [Worker Protection Standards](#) (WPS) for the use of products registered as pesticides with the EPA. The plaintiffs believe that they should have been provided with personal protective equipment.

The workers' (pro-bono) lawyer, **Hill Galendez**, believes that the farm workers handling the products should have been given adequate personal protection, and that those not handling them directly should not have been working in the greenhouse while a dangerous amount of pesticide was still airborne.

According to the workers, exposure to the disinfectants caused serious medical problems. **Hill Galendez** describes the symptoms of her clients: "*Some of them had to handle the chemicals directly and they had nosebleeds, they had eye burns. They had rashes when they were in contact with the disinfectants.*"

It would be hoped, for the health of many rural workers, that this class action, which is still awaiting trial, provoke an awakening on the part of the many companies that, even today in the United States, use the cheap labor of migrant workers without protecting them from the dangerous pesticides that they make them handle.

If you have made it this far, can you make one more small effort to allow us to continue this work of investigation and information to help the victims of pesticides?

Justice Pesticides needs you.

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