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## AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS

### MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDs) PREVENTION

#### Objective:

To help identify potential MSD hazards in the workplace that can lead to injuries, including sprains and strains.

#### Background:

Workers in the agriculture sector are often exposed to MSD hazards, including repetitive work, on a daily basis. These injuries can be disabling and can affect their earnings and the farmer's profits.

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs), also known as repetitive motion injuries, are injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system, which include muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, blood vessels, etc. Many body parts can be affected by MSDs. In the agriculture sector the most common include the low back, shoulders, and hands. Examples of MSDs include back strain, shoulder bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tennis elbow.

Symptoms of MSDs include:

- Pain with or without movement.
- Swelling and tenderness.
- Reduced range of motion and / or stiffness.
- Tingling and numbness.

Employers should encourage all workers to report any signs and symptoms of MSDs as soon as possible.

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## AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS – MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDs) PREVENTION

The main hazards associated with MSDs include fixed or awkward postures, force, and repetition. Examples of tasks performed in the agriculture sector that can lead to an MSD include:

- Working in the field in a stooped position for long periods.
- Reaching above shoulder level picking apples.
- Carrying heavy baskets of vegetables.
- Awkward wrist postures and pinching harvesting berries.

MSD prevention can help organizations reduce costs, increase productivity, improve quality, and improve worker satisfaction and well-being. Ergonomics is about matching the demands of the work to the capabilities of the workers. It's about working smarter, not harder. And it makes good business sense.

Look for ways to reduce potential MSD hazards in the workplace. Effective controls don't have to be elaborate. Often low tech, low cost solutions can be very effective. Encourage workers to suggest ways to improve the demands of the job.

Some examples include:

- Use tables, troughs, or benches to eliminate ground level work. Make the work height adjustable if possible.
- Use containers or baskets with handles.
- Use dollies or carts instead of carrying loads.
- Use a planting cart to eliminate kneeling or crouching.

Remember, preventing MSD hazards is less expensive and more effective than trying to control them later.

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## AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS – MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDs) PREVENTION

### Review the Following Points:

- The main hazards associated with MSDs include fixed or awkward postures, force, and repetition.
- Ergonomics is about matching the demands of the work to the capabilities of the workers.
- Encourage workers to suggest ways to improve the demands of the job.

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Revised: November 2014