



How to manage the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

PHASE 1

Identify hazards & assess risks



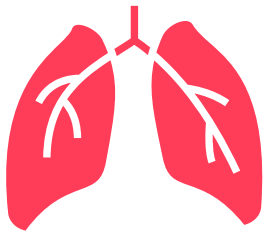
PHASE 2

Manage risks



PHASE 3

Monitor & review



Working with dusts, gases, fumes or vapours? Put in place control measures to eliminate or manage your workers' exposure to hazardous substances that can cause occupational lung diseases.

Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require you, as the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), to eliminate and minimise risks to the health and safety of workers as much as you reasonably can.

To manage risks of lung diseases in the agricultural industry, you must first identify when and where workers may be exposed to dusts, gases, fumes or vapours. This could involve ensuring your workers are vaccinated for preventable occupational lung diseases like Q fever.

For more information read our [information sheet How to identify the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in agricultural workers](#).

How to manage or control the risks

Once identified, the hierarchy of control measures can be used to manage risks. The hierarchy of control measures are:



Elimination

The most effective way to manage a risk is to completely remove the hazard from your workplace. This means eliminating the generation of dusts, gases, fumes, and vapours.

If this is not possible, so you must minimise the risks of workers' exposure to dusts, gases, fumes and vapours as much as you reasonably can. This could include:

- changing to organic or free-range farming or natural alternatives that don't use chemical pesticides or herbicides.

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AGRICULTURAL WORKERS



MANAGE

How to manage or control the risks (continued):



Substitution

Substitution controls involve replacing products and materials with ones that are less hazardous. Examples of replacing products and materials in agriculture may include:

- replacing high toxicity chemicals, such as pesticides, with chemicals of a lower toxicity
- replacing herbicides or fertilisers that cause high levels of dust with granular or liquid formations.



Isolation

Isolation controls place barriers or distance between a hazard and your workers. Physical barriers that remove the worker from contact with dusts, gases, fumes, and vapours are the most effective.

Isolation controls can include:

- limiting access to areas where chemicals (such as pesticides and fertilisers) are being mixed or used such as creating physical barriers and exclusion zones around tasks
- using machinery or vehicles that have an enclosed cabin and keeping the doors and windows closed when doing work that generates dusts, such as harvesting
- segregating workers from areas where grain is processed
- separate animal waste storage areas from general work areas
- having a room or area away from the work area for changing and eating.



Engineering

Engineering controls use physical devices to change the characteristics of a task. The best engineering controls for your workplace will depend on the tasks your workers carry out.

Engineering controls can include:

- local exhaust ventilation systems that take the generated dusts, gases, fumes, or vapours away from the worker
- tool mounted extraction systems
- nozzles that limit spray or droplet size to prevent mist drift and direction of chemicals
- a hay bale processor or spreader rather than hauling and spreading hay by hand
- machines for processing and cleaning fruit/vegetables rather than processing by hand
- installing mechanical ventilation and bio-filtration in animal housing.



Administrative

Administrative controls provide additional protection from risks after you have implemented substitution, isolation, and engineering controls.

Administrative controls may include:

- shift rotation policies to minimise the time workers spend in an exposure area
- laundering contaminated work clothes at work
- washing down contaminated work areas
- designated change areas for changing out of personal protective equipment or contaminated work clothes
- policies for storing, cleaning, and maintaining equipment
- signs to alert workers to a potential hazard
- housekeeping policies to keep work areas clean and minimise making any dusts airborne during cleaning.

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AGRICULTURAL WORKERS



MANAGE

How to manage or control the risks (continued):

Administrative (continued)

You must have administrative policies in place and train your workers (and retain records of training) to help them understand and manage the risks of exposure to hazardous dusts, gases, fumes or vapours that can cause occupational lung diseases. You also need to supervise your workers to make sure they understand and follow your administrative policies.



Talk with your work health and safety regulator

Your **WHS regulator** is here to help. You can talk with them if you have questions or need guidance. They can provide you with information and advice to help you identify the hazards at your workplace – including hazards that can cause lung diseases.

Download and use the 'How to manage the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in agricultural workers - checklist' to help you further.



Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE), including respirators, should only be used to supplement higher-level control measures as described above. It is important to make sure the PPE, including respiratory protective equipment (RPE):

- is suitable to protect against the risk
- fits the worker who will be wearing it
- is clean and in good working order
- is stored appropriately.

You also need to provide training on using and maintaining PPE and RPE and make sure workers are using it correctly. Depending on the risk, RPE may have to be fit tested by a competent person such as a certified occupational hygienist. You can search for occupational hygienists near you on the [Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists' website \(aioh.org.au\)](http://aioh.org.au).