

My name is Juan. I have been a migrant farm worker in Ontario for 8 years. Like many other workers, I am the backbone to our agricultural system. On the farm where I worked, I regularly sprayed pesticides. There are many occupational hazards with spraying chemicals and pesticides. Not only were there concerns regarding the chemicals we were using, but there were also concerns about access to PPE to properly protect ourselves. During my 8 years of working on the farm I was never provided with PPE to protect myself from exposure to the chemicals. Many workers have concerns regarding the dangers of pesticides and chemicals but are afraid of being sent home and not able to return to work the following year. On the farm that I worked at, there were workers who became sick or injured.

One day I started feeling sick and I needed to go to the hospital. After many tests, I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer with no chance of recovery. The doctors believe that it is very likely that I am sick because of the pesticides that were used on my farm. I was fired as soon as my employer found out about my diagnosis, and now my situation in Canada is uncertain and I have no way to support my family back home.

The message that I want to send to you is this: we come to this country to work, not to get sick, not to die.

It's time these conditions are exposed and each level of government takes the steps to protect the people who are the backbone of our food system. Our only wish is to return to our families at the end of the season. Your government must implement protections to end workplace dangers and deaths. The injuries and deaths of my comrades are on you, your staff and all those with power who to date have refused to do the right thing and provide basic protections to all workers, especially farm workers.

We will not go away and will continue to struggle so that future generations of workers are not subjected to what we face today.